RACIALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CARING TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS IN PRIVATE JEWISH SCHOOLS

by

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STATEMENT OF DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

Research is scant that is specifically on teacher-student relationships as an academic resource for racially diverse students in majority white, private religious schools compared with similar research done in public schools. This study identified the presence of caring teacher-student relationships at David Ben-Gurion Jewish Day School, a majority white, private religious school. Interview findings are incorporated from racially diverse students to capture their perceptions of the attributes that form these relationships. In deepening an understanding of the attributes that racially diverse students perceived, the study also includes an examination of whether teachers identified similar attributes of caring in their teaching-student relationships. Racially diverse students articulated that caring teacher-student relationships were a classroom resource and that affective behaviors including teacher sharing, teacher listening, and culturally responsive classroom practices promoted academic engagement and a sense of belonging at school. The research results also suggested that white teachers were able to support culturally responsive teaching practices despite the presence of colorblindness on the part of some teachers and that teachers recognized teacher sharing, teacher listening, and culturally responsive classroom practices as classroom resources for establishing caring teacher-student relationships with racially diverse students.

Mishpocha! This great adventure would not be possible without the love and inspiration of my wife Krista, and our children Lilah and Jaspar. We have travelled conceptual and literal geographies in the time of this writing. I am and will always be indebted to you for the patience you have shown in those moments when I could not be there and for the sound of your laughter that filled my heart even when I was not there to hear it. *One love! One heart!*

Lil sis, your pursuit of justice has served a persistent reminder that social justice must take place in classrooms and not courtrooms. *Don't give up the fight!*

Mom and Dad, you have made me proud. My life has been a construction of your beliefs and dreams for a more perfect world. It is a gift that remains my example for my children. *We forward in this generation triumphantly*, l'dor v'dor.

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I would like to acknowledge those students and teachers who were subjects of this research and contributed to this project by sharing your narratives. Your experiences of school whether as a student or a teacher speaks boldly of the presence of an ethic of care in private Jewish schools and of the importance of strengthening how we continue to construct these educational spaces in ways that affirm the identities of racially diverse students. I am honored by the trust you placed in me by sharing your experiences. It is my hope that the wisdom in your voices will echo for years to come in the development of curricula that will support social justice in Jewish education and be *liberatory*.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My family is transracial.[1] Our daughter, Lilah, who is eight years old, and my son, Jaspar, who is five, are both black Ethiopians, and my wife and I are Jewish and White. It is the first Shabbat after Donald Trump is elected. Lilah, with a smirk and a tone of sarcasm, says, "We're just gonna have to build a basement for me and Jaz to hide in." The moment I heard her say it, my heart sunk and my eyes welled up with tears. It did not matter that she was joking or that in California we do not have basements; it took only a synapse for my mind to leap from Lilah's basement to Anne Frank's secret annex to understand just how vulnerable she and Jaspar were feeling. Seeing my tears, Jaspar reassured me, "It's okay…cause…Daddy…you don't have to be in the basement with me and my sister." It is true that because I am a White male, I "don't have to be in the basement." But Jaspar is wrong, "it's not okay." It is not okay to ask anyone to live in a

[1] The term transracial is used to acknowledge that our children are of Ethiopian heritage and adopted into our White, Jewish family. It is also used to express that our family is transracial in response to social and cultural norms that are experienced by Black and Jewish families. For example, we attend the Black PTA, and we have had conversations with our children about the public use of words like "nigger" and "shylock," an anti-Semitic slur that portrays Jews as dishonest and recalls themes of blood-libels, as well as about slavery, the Holocaust, and a host of examples of why they might be treated differently because of social stereotypes imposed on Black and Jewish peoples.

state of consistent emotional threat. Yet racially diverse students confront a similar anxiety every day in schools in which teacher practices promote alienation and, as a result, hinder academic engagement.

Why does the schooling experience of racially diverse students matter? I enter this discussion as both an educator and a father of two Black children. In my experience of schooling, it has been clear from the very first day of kindergarten that, like other racially diverse children, Lilah was seen differently. And to be fair, she was different; the teacher at her majority White public school did not know about Ethiopian or Jewish holidays and Lilah did. When Lilah asked her teacher, "Am I Black or brown?" the teacher later confided in me that she had never been asked that before, and she did this with an awkwardness that suggested it was an inappropriate question for Lilah to ask. The social constructs that create incongruent moments between my children and their teachers are likely to shape my kids' interests and their experience of schooling. As the father in a transracial family, I have found myself searching to better understand what will be my children's experiences in elementary school and how differences in public or private schooling hold potential for the academic and psychic well-being of racially diverse students. I want to understand how these students perceive teacher-student relationships that promote or hinder their academic engagement. These relationships are a primary influence on how children construct their school identities: Understanding what my kids will excel at or avoid is likely to be the cumulative effect of teacher-student relationships from kindergarten through elementary, middle, and high school and even into their university experiences. As an educator and a parent, I am concerned that we are not seeking affective pedagogies that meet the needs of racially diverse students, and worse,

that we are guilty of social injustice in turning deaf ears and colorblind eyes to what racially diverse students tell us they need in curricula that affirm their cultural identities at school and ultimately support their academic engagement.

Background of the Study

A large body of research on K-12 education in the United States has focused on the negative school experiences of minority youth (Ferguson, 2000; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, Jeynes, 2010; Noguera, 2003). This literature spans a broad spectrum of themes, including student equity (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Watkins & Aber, 2012), school achievement (Keith & Page, 1985; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Roorda, Koomen, Split, & Oort, 2011; Schmakel, 2008), discipline policies, campus safety, and achievement gaps. Much of the literature has provided evidence that racially diverse students, particularly Black[2] and Latinx[3] students, occupy a tenuous space in the classroom (Ferguson, 2000; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Gregory, Nygreen, & Moran, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Morris, 2007; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 2003; Tatum, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999, 2008). While contemporary academic and policy debates continue to focus on the causes of minority student underachievement, the high school dropout rate, although it has shown

[2] For the purpose of this research, "Black" is used to include African American students and extends to include students whose ethnic and racial identities, including those who are biracial, research has identified or who have self-identified being of African descent. The decision to use Black was made because the research examined in this study is across multiple disciplines and eras, the terms Black and African American are often used interchangeably or are not defined.

[3] For the purpose of this research, "Latinx" is used as a gender neutral term to include Hispanic students and extends to include students whose ethnic and racial identities, including those who are biracial, research has identified or who have self-identified being Latinx or Hispanic. The decision to use Latinx was made because the research examined in this study is across multiple disciplines and eras, the terms Latino and Hispanic are often used interchangeably or are not defined.

improvement over the past decade, remains significantly higher for Latinx students (14%) and Black students (8%) than it is for White students (5%; Pew Research, 2014). While there are a variety of theories regarding the academic underachievement of Black and Latinx students, one educational landscape that appears to provide more effective resources for many racially diverse students is that of K-12 private religious schools (Jeynes, 2005).

There is increasing evidence that Black and Latinx students in majority White, private religious schools achieve at higher levels than do their public school counterparts (Jeynes, 2002; Roorda et al., 2011). Researchers have theorized different reasons for private religious schools' benefits, including student selection, school socioeconomic status (SES), parental involvement, positive classroom behaviors, orderly and safe learning environments, shared school values, caring teacher-student relationships, and ecological models (Rothstein, Carnoy, & Benveniste, 1999). Of these, caring teacher-student relationships hold the greatest potential and require deeper investigation because teachers provide an immediate opportunity to change the course of a student's academic outcome despite societal or institutional obstacles (Roorda et al., 2011). Research across public and private school domains has suggested that positive teacher-student relationships have the greatest influence in promoting Black and Latinx students' academic achievement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Roorda et al., 2011; Teven, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999).

Research specifically on teacher-student relationships as an academic resource for racially diverse students in majority White, private religious schools is scant compared with similar research done for public schools. Yet private schools, according to the

Council for American Private Education (2012), account for over 25% of K-12 schools in the United States. These 33,366 schools served approximately 5.5 million students, and over 80% of them have a religious affiliation. Further, the stated goal of private schooling, according to the National Association for Independent Schools (NAIS), is to foster a school climate that "values diversity as an essential component of the academic and social success of all students" (NAIS, *Principles of good practice*, 2012, pg. 14). Following the national trend of a growing minority population and increased acceptance of interracial marriage in America (Pew Research, 2012), private schools have seen an increase in "students of color." Comparing the enrollment data from the school year 2002–2003 with that from 2012–2013: 20% identified as students of color compared with 27.5%, 5.5% identified as Black compared with 6.1%, 2.7% identified as Latinx compared with 4.2%, and the largest increase was in students of color who identified as multiracial American, a population that grew from 2.9% in the 2002–2003 school year to 6.8% in 2012–13 (NAIS, *Facts at a glance*, 2012).

Among private schools, many Jewish schools have a reputation for academic excellence and are becoming more racially diverse in response to changing demographics. That private Jewish schools are racially diverse is, in part, the result of the historic and contemporary diversity of the Jewish people. Twenty percent of North American Jewry is ethnically and racially diverse, and approximately 10% are Jews of color (Tobin, Tobin, & Rubin, 2005). Perhaps, then, it should be expected that private Jewish schools have students who are Asian, Black, Latinx, Native American, Pacific Islander, and mixed race as part of their student makeups. While there is currently no national census on the percentage of racially diverse students in private Jewish schools, a

review of individual schools in geographic locations where one would expect to find racially diverse populations suggests that the number fluctuates between 1 and 30% depending on the makeup of the surrounding community. For example, in 2010 6% of one northern California private Jewish school's student body identified as racially diverse, and of these 15 students, 8 identified as Black, 2 as Latinx, and 5 as Asian compared with one southern California private Jewish school in which 21% of the student body identified as racially diverse, 68 identified as Latinx, and 1 as identified Asian (Schooldigger, 2012).[4] It appears likely that private Jewish schools, like other private religious schools located in urban environments, have begun functioning as oases from public schools that are perceived as failing (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Neal, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

Private religious school landscapes appear to hold great promise for understanding how teacher-student relationships promote caring that can be an academic resource for racially diverse students. These locations foster affective relationships through a set of shared religious values between teachers and students that permeate school culture. Jeynes (2010) suggested that religious faith has an "ameliorative impact" on the achievement gap between Black students and their White peers. Students in private religious schools may directly benefit from the presence of religious and cultural values, what Jeynes (2010) refers to as "character-based curriculum," in their experience of schooling. While Jeynes identified the positive effect of a character-based curriculum, he

[4] The reporting of students of color in private Jewish schools is complicated by the lack of a national census. These two examples merely provide evidence that further examination of private Jewish schools is needed to understand the experience of students of color.

did not define how this curriculum is operationalized as a resource for racially diverse students.

Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) suggested that the nature of the teacher-student relationships in Catholic schools promotes students' engagement in the classroom and importantly has the effect of diminishing disruptive moments from students who are not engaged. They suggested that the positive academic outcomes in Catholic schools stem primarily from teachers' holding students to a high level of academic accountability and holding themselves accountable for shaping students as global citizens. As one teacher explained, "What we have to transmit is a vision for the future to help them mold themselves into the kind of person they want to become" (Bryk et al., 1993, p. 98). Bryk et al. furthered the understanding of the value in the relationship between teacher and student; what they referred to as "teacher personalism" is what is operationalized to promote student engagement in private religious schools.

In investigating teacher-student relationships, Valenzuela (1999) suggested that one of the reasons Latinx students are disengaged from schooling is the cultural divide between teachers and students that "exacerbates social distance and increases the difficulty of developing an explicit ethic of caring" (p. 63). Further, Roorda et al. (2011) asserted that that affective teacher-student relationships and teacher-student closeness increase student engagement and achievement. In the research on academic promotion of racially diverse students in K-8 schooling, it is evident that teacher-student relationships can serve as a resource for these students. The importance previous research has placed on the teacher-student relationship and the positive impact of private religious schooling in promoting academic engagement for racially diverse students suggest a need to explore

how teacher-student relationships are formed and operationalized in K-8 private religious schools.

It is my belief that what is operationalized in teacher-student relationships that serve as classroom-level resources for racially diverse students in majority White, private religious schools is an ethic of teacher caring. I hypothesize that the private religious school advantage is that these learning environments foster caring teacher-student relationships through shared religious and cultural values that serve as academic resources, sources of culturally responsive caring, for racially diverse students. Private religious schools are unique from most public schools in that their school structures are formed around a core of shared values that foster an ethic of caring for one's fellow human or what is often described in the missions of these schools as the concept of building citizens in service to community. Student descriptions of private religious schools emphasize the ways in which teachers care and respond in a manner similar to what students experience at home. In private religious schools where there are caring teacher-student relationships, it is common for students and teachers to conceptualize school as an extension of family.

Contemporary research on the experiences of racially diverse students in private Jewish schools is absent from the body of academic literature. This study was intended to launch a discussion and promote additional research about how racially diverse students in private Jewish schools experience schooling and what makes for effective teaching in these academic spaces.

Research Questions

The intention of this research was to identify the presence or absence of caring teacher-student relationships in majority White, private Jewish schools and, further, to understand how students defined the attributes that form these relationships. Using racially diverse students' narratives provided an opportunity to capture how diverse students perceived teacher-student relationships and how caring teacher-student relationships are operationalized in the classroom. For the study, I used a selective sample of effective teachers and benefited from existing research that mapped the landscape of the investigation of teacher-student relationships that function as classroom resources. To deepen an understanding of the attributes that racially diverse students perceived, I also examined whether teachers identified similar attributes in their teaching practices toward forming caring teacher-student relationships. The following questions underpinned my inquiry:

1. Do racially diverse students in a majority White, K-8 private Jewish school perceive teacher-student relationships as caring?
2. What characteristics do racially diverse students use to articulate how caring teacher-student relationships are operationalized and do they identify a connection to their academic engagement?
3. What pedagogical practices do teachers articulate in establishing caring teacher-student relationships with racially diverse students in a majority White, K-8 private Jewish school?

Theoretical Framework

In this investigation of how racially diverse students perceive caring teacher-student relationships at a majority White, private Jewish school, I theorized a culturally responsive ethic of care to explore how race and caring operate in teacher-student relationships. A theorized ethic of care supports an investigation of the affective behaviors that form and shape caring relations. By foregrounding race and caring, the framework captures the social-pedagogical aspects of caring teacher-student relationships that serve as academic resources in the classroom experiences of racially diverse students.

I begin this section with a discussion of the importance of centering the research in the experiences of racially diverse students in the context of a private religious school. I proceed by introducing Noddings's (2005) conception of caring as a dialogic experience and more broadly as a pedagogical practice that maintains the teacher's accountability for the teacher-student relationship. I then problematize care by examining how conceptions of culturally responsive caring as theorized by Gay (2010) and Thompson (1998) can be operationalized to foster a sense of belonging for racially diverse students. Finally, I account for the way the school structures in private religious schools, specifically in private Jewish schools, reinforce culturally responsive caring.

A Race-Conscious Approach

In this research study, a race-conscious approach supports viewing racism as having a historical legacy and as endemic in the educational system. It makes visible normative positions that privilege whiteness, such as liberal notions that K-12 schooling

is meritocratic or that racially diverse students are the same as White students in their education experiences. Using a race-conscious approach provided a lens to make transparent commonly held deficit narratives that exist in majority White school contexts and supported foregrounding in students' own voices the academic experiences of racially diverse students in private religious schools.

In this research study, I center the exploration specifically on racially diverse students' experiences and the activation or dismissal of their racial and cultural identities by their teachers. The use of student interviews provided a counter-story that critiqued dominant notions of colorblindness and meritocracy embedded in the educational practices of private religious schools. The construction of racially diverse students' identities by teachers as alien or disruptive in academic spaces reinforces notions of race and culture as a deficit (Valenzuela, 1999). A race-conscious approach supports the present research by taking into account racially diverse students' experiences of schooling and validating their narratives of what accounts for oppressive or effective teaching. Centering the research in caring while accounting for race supported this investigation of culturally responsive pedagogies and caring in teacher-student relationships.

Conceptualizing a Theory of Care

The conceptualization of caring as a theoretical framework was established by Noddings (2005) as a way to explore the ethic of care within the relationships between the carer and the cared for. Noddings suggested that "teachers not only have to create caring relations in which they are the carers, but that they also have a responsibility to

help their students develop the capacity to care" (p. 18). For Noddings, the ethic of care was anchored in affective behaviors that are at play in the way teachers and students shape positive relations. She identified four components of teacher caring: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (Noddings, 2005); in the classroom, these function as a pedagogy of care that teachers can activate in establishing caring relationships. Used as a theoretical framework, a pedagogy of care supports understanding ways in which caring is formed and the consciousness of the carer towards the needs of the cared for, what Noddings (2005) situated as the carer's engrossment and motivational displacement toward the cared for. The basis of the caring relationship is affective in that it is built on the interpersonal connection between the carer and cared for.

The affective domain, in this study, is constructed in the teacher-student relationship. Research has suggested that student perceptions of caring relationships are associated with affective interactions with teachers that support relatedness between the teacher and student (Roorda et al., 2011; Teven, 2007; Tosolt, 2010). Teachers' communicating their caring through their teaching practices has been shown to be an academic resource with positive effects on student outcomes including motivation, engagement, academic success, and belonging (Cornelius-White, 2007; Faircloth & Hamm, 2004; Roorda et al., 2011). Supporting the importance of the affective domain in promoting caring teacher-student relationships is that students prominently describe teachers they perceive as caring as behaving like family members or friends (Howard, 2001; Tosolt, 2010). The connections between caring and teacher authenticity and caring and students' belonging were of particular interest in this study because research has shown that authenticity and belonging are valued by racially diverse students and that

they are present when students identify caring teacher-student relationships (Howard, 2001; Tosolt, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). Racially diverse students seek forms of teacher caring that are both interpersonal and academic in nature as classroom resources (Roorda et al. 2011; Tosolt, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). Underlying these findings was the concept that belonging had a positive effect on student academic outcomes and that caring teacher-student relationships academically engaged racially diverse students. Cornelius-White (2007) argued that "Secure and reciprocal attachments are important for students to engage in their relationships with teachers, peers, and subject matter and develop healthy self-concepts and senses of well being" (p. 115). The findings of Cornelius-White (2007) and Roorda et al. (2011) provide strong support for why teachers who are perceived by racially diverse students as caring are critical to these students' school success.

Noddings (2005) held to a notion of caring as an authentic practice of life or as it occurs in relational moments: "Caring is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors. I have put great emphasis on caring as relation, because our temptation is to think of caring as a virtue, an individual attribute" (p. 17). The conception of caring as a practice is important because it emphasizes that caring teacher-student relationships are mutually constructed and take place in dialogic moments during the experience of being a student. This understanding does not remove the teacher from her or his position of authority, but maintains the teacher's responsibility in establishing a classroom in which in certain moments the cared for and the carer are fluid in order to establish a social-pedagogical approach that supports "education as the practice of freedom---as opposed to education as the practice of domination" (Freire, 2016, p. 81). A theory of care that seeks

coauthorship in its operating in the dialogic and maintaining fluidity between the carer and cared for provides a way of exploring the affective nature of social-pedagogical practices in caring teacher-student relationships. Understanding that caring requires both the teacher to show caring and the student to perceive caring provides a foundation for understanding why pedagogies that value students' racial identities may also promote their academic achievement by valuing their authentic identities (Howard, 2001; Jeynes, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Noddings, 2005; Subedi, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999, 2008). However, caring pedagogies may, despite good intentions, replicate structural inequality if the caring is not culturally responsive. Thompson (1998) suggested that "what is notable in colorblind theories of caring is that the cultural specificity of what counts as caring is not taken into account" (p. 527).

Culturally Responsive Caring

In establishing a theory of care as a framework for this research, it was important for me to expand on Noddings's (2005) universal conception of caring by including culturally responsive care.[5] My doing so supported a more accurate understanding of how racially diverse students perceive caring and accounted for how differences in race influence conceptions of caring in the culturally responsive classroom. Noddings's universal construction of care is problematic in its idealized White, Christian narratives

[5] The term culturally responsive (Gay, 2010) accounts for conceptions of culturally relevant pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2009) and culturally specific caring (Thompson, 1998) that supports the academic engagement and sense of belonging of racially diverse students at school through teaching that affirms "cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them" (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

of family and innocence that may not account for the experiences of racially diverse students and that in the process potentially affirm colorblind approaches to teaching (Thompson, 1998). Deploying forms of culturally responsive care through teacher practices is an opportunity to value differences in teacher-student relationships with the desire of establishing authentic relationships that promotes student engagement (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). As Thompson (1998) suggested, "African American students cannot trust teachers who (wittingly or unwittingly) lie to them about racism, ignore Black achievements, gloss over slavery and segregation, or confine the study of Black history and culture to Black History Month" (p. 540). In responding to the need for culturally responsive care, Black feminist conceptions of care are culturally specific in their accounting for concepts such as othermothering, the Black church, community, and social activism. Gay (2010) suggested that culturally responsive caring matters because "it focuses on caring for instead of about the personal well-being and academic success of ethnically diverse students, with a clear understanding that the two are interrelated" (p. 48). Caring for students emphasizes teachers' responsibility in designing a pedagogy of caring that affirms racially diverse students' cultural identities by constructing school as a place where they feel they belong.

Jewish conceptions of caring are noticeably absent in the discussion of culturally responsive care. Jewish feminist and queer theorists have suggested that a particular Jewish lens is needed in order to critique intersectional spaces of race, ethnicity, class, and gender because Jews are frequently omitted or assimilated into whiteness. A counter-narrative to Jewish assimilation articulates that whiteness can be both racist and anti-Semitic (Boyarin et al., 2003; Brettschneider, 2016). Brettschneider (2016) suggested that

Jewish traditions are for the most part particularistic in orientation and that Talmudic text and cultural practices offer a counter text to Western, specifically Aristotelian, constructions of identity that, similar to Noddings's (2005) conception of care, are universalist. Brettschneider argued that Jewish traditions offer an "alternative system of complex hierarchies. In the structure erected in this text there is no single standpoint from which to gain perspective. The idea that other noncanonical modes of thinking—even if oppressive in their own contexts—might highlight aspects of the dominant mode in need of critique" (pg. 24-25). One example of a multivocal text is the Passover story, which some might consider the master narrative of the Jewish people; Passover provides an example of how Jewish text and tradition function in a particularistic fashion. On the surface, a biblical reading of Passover might appear universalistic—a story about Jewish identity that is revealed within the telling of the Israelite journey from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. However, a closer look at the story of Passover reveals a counter-narrative in Moses (a purposefully orphaned Israelite slave who is disguised by his othermothers and becomes the adopted son of Pharaoh), whose story of personal liberation eventually becomes the narrative of liberation for the Jewish people and leads to the establishment of Israel. Beyond the literal counter-narrative in the liberation story, the performance of Passover can also be understood as a subversive act; this is because the structure of the Seder is commonly believed to be a masked version of the Greco-Roman symposium. In fashioning the Seder after the symposium, Jews were able to keep alive their cultural practices by secretly retelling our liberation story while under the surveillance of their oppressors. Further, a contemporary exploration of the performance of Passover reveals, as Brettschneider (2016) suggested, that the interpretive and iterative

aspects of Jewish texts disrupt notions of a universal perspective and support the construction of multivocal understandings that are the result of Talmudic traditions and the multicultural nature of the Jewish diaspora. For example, in the contemporary performance of Passover, this has resulted in a variety of Passover stories that explore the Passover narrative of liberation from culturally specific points of view that are inclusive of geographic and family folklore; for example, the Seder rituals and traditions of Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews differ greatly in what ritual foods are included or excluded. Some feminist perspectives on Passover problematize the traditional male narrative by including the stories of Moses's mother and othermothers or by introducing Miriam's cup alongside the tradition of Elijah's cup. In another feminist and LGBTQ revamping, an orange is included on the Seder plate as a symbol of equality. In our home, in addition to many contemporary rituals of equality and Ethiopian foods, we include a red potato on the Seder plate, which has become a popular way to commemorate the inclusion of Ethiopian Jewry into the Passover story. Like many Jewish texts, Passover is interpretive and multivocal; the unique retellings of Passover establish it as both a master narrative of the Jewish people and an experience in counter-story telling. Its particularism maintains a flexibility that supports multiple expressions of Jewishness.[6] Reading Jewish texts such as Passover from a Jewish feminist perspective supports a conception of Jewishness that a) is not assimilationist and supports a construction of Jewish identity as outside the dominant narrative, b) recognizes multivocality in Jewish texts and cultural practices that are shared and different across the knowledge of the diaspora, and c) illuminates women as more than child bearers in the conversation of Jewish continuity.

[6] Jewishness is used in this manner to recognize intersectionality in the diverse expressions of Jewish identity.

Building on the scaffolding of a Jewish feminist perspective, a Jewish approach toward caring must remain particularistic in order to accommodate expressions of care across Jewish geographies of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and religious practices. Jewishness supports a conception of Jewish caring as a framework rather than a theory because a framework maintains elasticity in its inclusivity of many expressions of Jewish caring and organic in its flexibility in welcoming other scholars and educators to develop their own *midrash* (commentaries) as they enter a dialogic construction of Jewish caring. I frame Jewish caring as those religious and cultural beliefs that are constructed in the experience of private Jewish schooling and that, as a result, provide a culturally responsive environment in which Jewish caring happens in a way that supports the academic engagement and sense of belonging at a school of racially diverse students.

In order for teachers in private Jewish schools to avoid constructing racially diverse students as the same as White students, they must approach caring as a pedagogical practice and critique their curricula with a race-conscious lens toward the goal of affirming students' sense of belonging; specifically, they must provide forms of caring that maintain that the experiences of racially diverse students are different from those of their White peers (Gay, 2010). The ability of teachers in private Jewish schools to talk about race in the classroom is a prerequisite to their ability to provide culturally responsive care. Teachers must maintain authenticity in their relationships with racially diverse students by acknowledging that race matters or they will not be perceived as caring (Gay, 2010; Thompson, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999). The value of culturally responsive caring is that it forms the foundation for curricula that maintain the visibility of race and culture and in doing so promote caring teacher-student relationships that are

critical in promoting student engagement.

The concept of culturally responsive caring was important to this research because the types of progressive private Jewish schools that were central to this study are coed and educational environments in which teachers are overwhelmingly White and female, and research findings have suggested that White teachers have difficulty caring in culturally responsive ways (Cooper, 2003; Thompson, 1998 & 2004; Tosolt, 2009). This lack of cultural understanding can lead to miscommunication between teachers and students that can interfere with a teacher's ability to establish caring relationships. With the understanding that race changes the experience of schooling, investigating the ways racially diverse students perceive caring teachers in private Jewish schools also informs an understanding of what teacher practices are perceived as caring and how these practices are operationalized within the teacher-student relationship.

Research findings on Catholic schools, which hint at what may be going on at David Ben-Gurion Jewish Day School[7], have suggested it is often difficult if not unknown for White teachers of Black students to show cultural caring by holding an authoritative approach to discipline that focuses on the use of "power for the student's good" and maintaining a race-conscious approach (Cooper, 2003). Despite the challenges that White teachers may have talking directly about race in the classroom, students have acknowledged that teacher caring positively affected their teacher-student relationships (Cooper, 2003; Howard, 2001). Further, across multiple studies of racially diverse students, the theme of "caring in a familial way," which has been described as giving advice about real life and supporting individual academic needs the way a parent might,

[7] *David Ben-Gurion Jewish Community Day School* is a pseudonym.

is identified as crucial to activating culturally responsive caring (Howard, 2001; Thompson, 1998; Tosolt, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). One of the ways students frequently describe familial caring is revealed in moments that emphasize teachers' expectations of students:

> She's mean and she hollers a lot, but you learn. I know that I have learned a lot this year, especially in reading and math. And if you look at all of the kids who make the honor roll or honor society, they're mostly in her class, so I guess it's worth it [being in Ms. Russell's class]. (Howard, 2001, p. 139)

While this may seem contrary to normative classroom practices, Howard (2001) suggested that comments like these "reflect a teacher practice that is essential to culturally responsive teaching, which is creating a learning environment that helps students to reach their highest levels of academic success" (p. 139). Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2011) found that minority students identify authority as a form of cultural caring in "teachers who 'step to us' and are not afraid" (p. 296); Students' comments frequently link practices of cultural caring to positive teacher-student relationships. Valenzuela (1999) found that when teachers practice cultural caring in ways that students perceive as authentic, the teacher-student relationship benefits. Further, much of the literature findings on teacher caring suggest that authenticity in the way teachers care is an expectation that racially diverse students hold of their teachers (Howard, 2001; Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011; Valenzuela, 1999, 2008). In one study, a Black female high school student expressed this expectation of caring by stating, "We just want to go to school and believe our teachers like us" (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011, p. 295). In another example, a Latina high school student expressed the expectation for authenticity when she provided some advice to a new teacher: "Sir, just

one thing. Don't lie to us" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 113). It may be that culturally responsive caring fosters positive teacher-student relationships because racially diverse students perceive these relationships as affirming their lived experiences, and thus, the teacher becomes a trusted adult or extended family member. Further, it is possible that colorblind models of caring that position students of color as the same as White students perpetuate a stance of resistance in racially diverse students that could become a barrier to developing positive teacher-student relationships (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Valenzuela, 1999).

Valenzuela (1999) suggested that such student-held positions of resistance should be recognized as opposition to schooling, particularly classroom pedagogies that are not culturally responsive, and not as resistance to academic achievement or as a student-held desire to disengage from educational pursuits. Racially diverse student narratives make available a critique of classroom practices and reinforce the notion that racially diverse students have an unyielding desire for academic success. These narratives provide an opportunity to understand the value of caring teacher-student relationships in disrupting colorblind notions that position racially diverse students as the same as White students and further affirm their authentic identities. That students from different racial backgrounds may view caring differently is an important acknowledgement for teachers seeking to develop caring teacher-student relationships. Schools are not neutral locations and are structured in ways that privilege White cultural norms (Tosolt, 2009). By affirming students' authentic identities, teachers are able to establish caring relationships with racially diverse students that may have the power to mediate racism and in doing so improve academic outcomes.

Understanding how teachers at David Ben-Gurion form caring teacher-student relationships allowed me to grasp what is operating at this school and more generally in private religious schools. The theory around culturally responsive caring suggests that teachers, when they are successful in developing caring relationships with racially diverse students, show caring that students perceive as "familial" because it is (a) authoritative, or the teacher is strict in a way that promotes high levels of academic success and exhibits effective classroom control, (b) supportive of students' needs in the classroom and addresses challenges that students confront in their home lives (outside the boundaries of school), and (c) provides culturally responsive curricula for classroom discussion of complex topics including ethnicity, race, and religion in a way that is engaging and fun. If establishing caring teacher-student relationships is built on establishing affective relationships as is suggested by developing schooling that is familial in its orientation, then it is likely that the structure of David Ben-Gurion provides an opportunity for teachers to exhibit these attributes in their classrooms because they are fundamentally similar to Catholic schools.

Caring and School Structure

The Jewish American community, coming out of periods of significant immigration in the 19th century and the Holocaust in the 20th century, situated the contemporary Jewish school as an opportunity to ensure that Jewish continuity in all of its religious and cultural diversity would prevail. The conception of the contemporary private Jewish school was rooted during a period of historic expansion from roughly 1940 through 1965, in which the number of schools grew from 35 schools serving

approximately 7,700 in students in 1940 to 306 schools serving 65,000 students in 1964 (Schiff, 1968). Private Jewish schools followed synagogues into suburban America, making Jewish education more accessible to an increasingly middle class Jewish population; today the number of schools has been approximated at 861 serving slightly over 250,000 students PreK-12 (Schick, 2014). The non-Orthodox schools that reflect the ambit of this study make up approximately 13% of all-day private Jewish school enrollment (Schick, 2014).

In what might be understood as a precursor to culturally responsive pedagogy, the contemporary private Jewish school envisioned an education that was both religiously, linguistically, and culturally Jewish and secular in order to educate children in a culturally affirming manner with the explicit intention of staving off assimilation and strengthening notions of a Jewish collective identify (Schiff, 1968). Unlike their Catholic counterparts, private Jewish schools were not perceived as parochial. As Schiff (1968) articulated, there are three clarifying differences between private Jewish schools and parochial schools: "there is no central authority in American Jewish life," "they are distinct educational units founded and supported by autonomous, self-governing lay boards," and "teachers are not clergymen belonging to a segregated order, but men and women living as free members in their communities engaged in Jewish teaching as a profession" (p. 128–129). The conception of private Jewish schools may be understood as less about the exclusive right of a religious group to educate its children according to a specific doctrine and more as a response to an American public school system that sought to acculturate Jewish immigrants. The private Jewish school was the antidote to the public school whose intention, constructing the American citizen, competed against the

Jewish communal desire to maintain the religious, linguistic, and cultural heritage of Judaism.

Despite not being parochial in nature, private Jewish schools have benefited from the same structural differences that differentiate religious schools from public schools. Bryk et al. (1993) suggested that Catholic schools are differentiated from public schools because they are structured around two moral concepts that students are likely to perceive as caring: (a) "Christian personalism" requires teachers play an extended role in the care of their students, and (b) Catholic schools are organized through "subsidiarity," which disrupts bureaucratic organization by providing more autonomy for teachers to respond to students with what may be perceived by students as culturally responsive caring and student-centered approaches. In the classroom, this might result in the teacher's establishing a caring relationship through responding personally to challenges in a student's academic performance or life in a way the student may perceive as caring (e.g., providing additional academic or life counseling outside of school hours) rather than responding bureaucratically (e.g., expulsion from the class or referral to a school counselor who may not be a trusted adult). The structure of private religious schools on ethical values that are prosocial appears to provide an opportunity for teachers to show caring in ways that students perceive as such (Bryk et al., 1993; Jeynes, 2002; Rothstein et al., 1999).

Private Jewish schools can be differentiated from public schools because they are organized around moral and ethical concepts connected to culturally responsive forms of Jewish caring. In the classroom, these religious and cultural tenants guide teacher practices and curricula in developing students as global citizens. Though these tenants

may be different from school to school, they often include *chesed*, *Klal Yisrael*, *tikkun olam*, and *tzedakah*:

Chesed: Acting with love and kindness. In the context of private Jewish schools, *Chesed* is strived for in teacher-student and student-student relationships. Teachers who construct relations with *chesed* are likely to be understood by students as caring.

Klal Yisrael: The community of Israel is often talked about as the Jewish people or Jewish peoplehood. In some schools, *Klal Yisrael* is understood as only religious Jews. However, in this research, a more progressive interpretation was maintained that included Jews in Israel and in the Jewish diaspora regardless of religious practice. Teachers use *Klal Yisrael* as a resource for supporting constructions of diversity that are historic and contemporary within Jewish peoplehood.

Tikkun olam: The obligation to repair the world. Private Jewish schools like David Ben-Gurion are commonly structured around the concept of *tikkun olam* as a form of global responsibility, inclusive of one's self and the greater good of all people, to build a more perfect world through individual and communal actions. Teachers construct assignments using the concept of *tikkun olam* to support students' understanding of their responsibility as global citizens.

Tzedakah: Acts of righteousness or justice that can be understood in the context of private Jewish schools as an obligation to care for those in need or to create a more just world. *Tzedakah* projects are a mechanism for incorporating Jewish values into a culturally responsive curriculum that can foster students' exploration of injustice at social fault lines (e.g., racism, food scarcity, homelessness, etc.).

The implementation of caring within the school structure and curricula in private

Jewish schools supports the likelihood that these schools will share the positive outcomes that racially diverse students benefit from in other private religious schools. In addition, the diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural heritages of the Jewish people can be incorporated into the curricula by teachers and operationalized to foster culturally responsive assignments that support the construction of caring teacher-student relationships.

The ancient and more contemporary themes of slavery, Diaspora, and immigration are ever-present in the cultural narratives of Jewish peoplehood and permeate Jewish schooling in a way that may provide a unique mechanism for teachers to care in culturally responsive ways and for racially diverse students to perceive caring in being able to identify aspects of their own lives and cultural histories in Jewish narratives. The result of Jewish diaspora is that, like the Jewish texts, the Jewish population is multivocal in its ethnic, racial, and religious construction. Despite Jews' being stereotypically identified as White, European, and orthodox, Jewish identity is complex and includes Jews who identify ethnically as Mizrachi, Sephardic, and Ashkenazi, as well as racially African, Black, Afro-Caribbean, Asian, Latinx, and Spanish and across a spectrum of religious practices from culturally Jewish (including being secular) to Orthodox. Research has frequently identified Jews as ethnically and racially the same as other White Europeans (Fine, Weiss, Pruitt, & Burns, 2004; Fordham & Ogbu, 1996; Tosolt, 2009). While Goldberg (1997) made the case that White, European Jews in North America who have assimilated also benefit from White privilege, particularly in the areas of educational attainment, home ownership, and socioeconomic status, it is more difficult, if not impossible, to validate Goldberg's claim for Jews whose ethnicity, race and religious identification are more marginalized in the

American experience.

How Jews are accounted for in educational research often fails to accurately recognize the intersectionality of Jewish religious, racial, or cultural identification; much of the research too simplistically assumes Jews to be White. For example, in her methodology, Tosolt (2009) suggested that Jews are the same as White Europeans by uniformly categorizing those who identified as "Jewish" as "autonomous minorities" in her adoption of Fordham's and Ogbu's (1986) categorization of the minorities that exist in America. Further, in the same study, Tosolt (2009) stated that those who identify as "Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Chinese, from the Indian subcontinent, and Middle Eastern" formed the "voluntary minorities" category and that the category of "involuntary minorities" was for those who identified as "American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black or African American, or Latino" (p. 410). That Tosolt (2009) failed to recognize that "Jewish" could be an identifier for all three categories—autonomous, voluntary, and involuntary minorities—and that Jewish religious, racial, and cultural identity is inclusive of Europe as well as Asia, India, and the Middle East, as well as of Black and Latinx, could have affected her statistical outcomes. Regardless of its impact on Tosolt's data, the intersectionality of Jewish identity includes being *other* and may allow for Jewish teachers in public as well as in private Jewish schools to more effectively teach in a manner that racially diverse students perceive as culturally responsive and as a resource in establishing caring teacher-student relationships. This suggests that the complex religious, racial, and cultural composition of the Jewish people, despite the ability of White, North American Jewry to benefit from White privilege, has the power to problematize the dominant narrative of Jews as the same as White,

European Christians. As a result, Jews' identification as other and Jewish schools' being organized around religious and cultural values may present through teacher practices as a classroom-level resource in a manner that racially diverse students, whether religiously identified as Jewish or not, perceive as culturally responsive. The difference in the classroom experience of these students in private Jewish schools, because the narrative of Jews as other is woven into the fabric of Jewish history and contemporary life (e.g., Ethiopian Jewry, Sephardic practices, familial experiences of expulsion and immigration) and because this may be a religious and cultural context that more effectively supports these students' belonging, may be that White Jewish teachers are able to call upon these narratives of otherness as viable classroom resources for affirming culturally responsive caring and establishing caring teacher-student relationships.

The combined effect of this research framework is that it prioritizes the experience of schooling of racially diverse students, providing depth to a perspective that might not otherwise be heard regarding how these students understand the construction of caring teacher-student relationships. Further, this approach positions the data as a critique of liberal conceptions of meritocracy and colorblindness that are present in schooling. By establishing qualitative data based on the narrative experiences of racially diverse students, this research helps to identify and operationalize what is happening in the teacher-student relationship at David Ben-Gurion and has the potential to directly inform the practices in private Jewish schooling and more generally K-12 education. The research findings confirm previous understandings and build on them to support reshaping teaching practices and educational policy in order to better meet the academic needs of racially diverse students.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore what potential teacher-student relationships hold for promoting racially diverse students' academic achievement in private Jewish school contexts. Specifically, I was interested in understanding what racially diverse students identify as caring teacher-student relationships at majority White, private Jewish schools and if these relationships motivate their engagement. More broadly, examining teacher-student relationships within the context of private Jewish schooling can provide a deeper understanding of the associations between caring teacher-student relationships and racially diverse students in majority White, religious school contexts. This investigation was intended to provide scholarly insight into how teacher-student relationships are formed and operationalized in a way that can promote racially diverse students' academic engagement as well as categorizing what resources minority students identify as salient to successfully navigating the experience of schooling in a majority White, private religious school.

To situate this study, it was beneficial to explore research from authors who critically examined the classroom experiences of K-12 students and private religious schooling in order to locate the key conversations that framed the terrain of relevant work. The literature review provides a snapshot of the way teacher-student relationships are constructed in public schools and private religious schools. I first discuss the literature documenting the educational outcomes for racially diverse students in private schools, focusing on religious institutions. I then narrow to discuss the literature explaining the importance of teacher-student relationships, focusing on how racially diverse students' perceptions of caring teacher-student relationships operate as classroom resources that

affirm their cultural identities and promote academic engagement. These studies frame an exploration about whether private religious schools provide a unique resource in developing caring teacher-student relationships that could inform approaches in public education.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to position the questions that pertained to negotiating racial identity in K-8 private religious school, I examined clusters of research in the areas of private schooling, teacher-student relationships, and Black and Latinx students' perceptions on effective pedagogy across the fields of education and psychology. Research suggests that a student's sense of belonging is important to her or his academic achievement. When students report feeling that they fit into school or express that they like school, they achieve at higher levels than do students who feel "disconnected" or dislike school (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Hallinan, 2008). For racially diverse students attending majority White, private religious schools, there is the potential to feel or to be constructed by teachers as alien (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007). Further, Black and Latinx students are most affected by the positive and negative influences of feeling a sense of or lack of belonging at school (Fan, Williams, & Corkin, 2011). However, the research, though limited, on the academic success of Black and Latinx students in private religious schools compared with that of their counterparts in public schools suggests that there is something different taking place in these academic spaces (Jeynes, 2005). This literature review examines the conceptual framings as well as evidence at the intersection

of race, teacher-student relationships, and private religious schools to better understand if (a) private religious schools promote academic engagement for racially diverse students, (b) the quality of teacher-student relationships, in particular for racially diverse students, plays a role in academic engagement, and (c) what we learn about successful pedagogical practices from racially diverse students' perceptions of caring teacher-student relationships.

Private Religious School Impact on Academic Engagement

Research on private religious schools is shaped by the academic and policy debate on whether or not to privatize education. This politically charged debate has generated a significant body of literature with the intention of making arguments for or against the benefits of private schooling (Dronkers & Robert, 2008; Fenzel & Domingues, 2009; Jeynes, 2003; Sander, 2005; Subedi, 2006). While generally the literature is capable of pointing researchers in a specific direction, it has been insufficient in its ability to accurately capture the complexity of contemporary questions about how racially diverse students navigate studenthood in majority White, private religious schools today. Unfortunately, qualitative research that is less than 10 years old and captures student narratives in the context of private religious school is scarce, and by design, it might not be generalizable to other contexts because regional geographies and school culture may not be replicable. The limitations of the research make it difficult to understand if private religious schools are fostering caring teacher-student relationships and effectively answering Nel Noddings's (2005) challenge to care in schools: "When we discuss

teaching and teacher-learner relationships in depth, we will see that teachers not only have to create caring relations in which they are carers, but that they also have a responsibility to help their students develop the capacity to care" (p. 18). Noddings situated caring in the relationship between teacher and student. Beyond ensuring that teachers model respectful communication and provide academic support, understanding how caring is operationalized in teacher-student relationships from the perspective of racially diverse students can inform pedagogical practices that support their academic engagement.

However, a short sightedness of Noddings' theory of care is that it does not take into account culturally specific forms of caring and thus fails to problematize race. Because racially diverse students must confront systemic bias, teachers who adopt culturally responsive pedagogies that provide affirming classrooms provide care in ways that are perceived as culturally specific (Garza & Soto Huerta, 2014). On the other hand, the absence of culturally specific forms of caring has the potential to render teacher caring colorblind and in the process to fall short of critically questioning constructions of caring that privilege White ideals, which in the process ignores the potentially positive effects of historically rooted, culturally responsive forms of caring (Garza & Soto Huerta, 2014; Thompson, 1998, 2004).

In the classroom, teachers who implement colorblind approaches to caring may be uncomfortable talking about race and will likely find their attempts at caring insufficient in communicating their efforts to care to racially diverse students. Along this line, Cooper (2003) found that White teachers avoided talking about race and racism in the classroom because they felt "that the most equitable stance toward race was a color-blind one" and

"feared such discussions [about race and racism] would be misunderstood by administrators, parents, and the community at large" (p. 424). Interestingly, in Cooper's research of the literature, she found that some White, Catholic school teachers maintained a racial consciousness and were more willing than their public school counterparts to engage in discussions related to race and racism. This might suggest that teachers at private religious schools exhibit an ethic of care that racially diverse students perceive as culturally responsive. If so, private religious schools may do better than public schools at caring for their racially diverse students.

The premise that private religious schools could already be examples of the caring schools that public schools desire to become (perhaps once were before the shift toward test-based education) may be difficult for some progressive educators to accept because of their entrenched ideological beliefs that frame public schooling as a leveling of the playing field for the greater good. Public school teachers who believe that their schools are colorblind are likely to believe that racially diverse students are benefitting from school practices without recognizing how these educational spaces reproduce systemic biases that privilege whiteness and perceive race and culture as deficits. Noddings (2005) is herself an example of an educator who dismisses the potential educational benefit of private religious school, which maintains a culture of caring, by suggesting that private and private religious schools are merely business entities that are worried about the bottom line and not the well-being of students. She wrote: "I would remind readers that privatization is not necessary … it would almost certainly exacerbate economic inequalities in the population. The very promise of privatization—its emphasis on the benefits of competition—is frightening" (Noddings, 2005, pp. xx–xxi). Noddings may

not have been wrong, but she inaccurately implied that American public schools function outside of economic systems of competition in an era of high-stakes testing and the related economic incentives. Often public schools within the same districts compete with each other for dollars, as well as for funding of public programs at the federal, state, and community levels.

In some communities, for example Oakland and Piedmont, California, citizens have created economic and racial borders through city incorporation, thus, driving the public benefit of property taxes to target specific school districts. Economic competition has a direct influence on classroom-level resources that includes the ability to attract and retain talented teachers, class size, and academic resources available outside of class. Unlike public schools, private religious schools' funding models have a history of serving poor and minority populations that is manifest in their religious mandates and that has led to Catholic and other religious schools' operating in heavily populated, low-income, and ethnically diverse communities. Further, data have suggested that private religious schools promote Black and Latinx students' academic achievement and engagement (Jeynes, 2005; Neal, 1998; Sander, 2005).

Some researchers have suggested that religious climate, similar to school or racial climate, affects students' academic achievement and engagement (Benveniste et al., 2003; Jeynes, 2005; Subedi, 2006). Because of the division of religion and state, public school teachers may struggle to access the religious identities of their students or be uncomfortable exploring the ways in which religious dimensions operate in teacher-student relationships and in classroom curricula. Considering that race and religion are integral parts of student identities that cannot be easily untangled, it should not be

surprising that there is evidence that private religious schools provide culturally responsive resources including religion that may not be available to students in many public schools. The valuable classroom resources of caring and culturally responsive pedagogies that Gay (2010), Ladson-Billings (2009), Valenzuela (1999), and many other progressive educators have argued are lacking in public schools may be more accessible in private religious schools (Fenzel & Domingues, 2009; Jeynes, 2003; Sander, 2005; Subedi, 2006).

Research on how religious identity and attending a private religious school affect students' academic experience has focused on whether religious connections promote academic achievement. Overall, there is strong evidence that maintaining a religious identity had a positive influence on students' academic success (Dronkers & Robert, 2008; Fenzel & Domingues, 2009; Jeynes, 2003; Sander, 2005; Subedi, 2006). These research findings suggest a spectrum of characteristics that are present in private religious schools that contribute to student achievement including abstaining from behaviors that impede academic success, having a strong work ethic, having a sense of purpose beyond school, and informal relationships between teachers and students. The differences in the school characteristics between private religious and public schools, particularly the ability of private school teachers to construct extended relationships—what students perceive as familial-like relationships (Bryk et al., 1993)—appear to promote the engagement of racially diverse students and have a positive impact on student motivation (Jeynes 2002, 2010; Neal, 1998; Sander 2001). Private religious school teachers may have an advantage over their public school counterparts in their ability to operationalize these familial relationships in ways that resonate as culturally relevant and as caring with

racially diverse students; thus, they are providing classroom-level resources for minority students. The benefit of caring relationships as a classroom resource is most evident in urban schools because the educational experiences of students in urban schools, White or minority, are marked by low levels of teacher experience, students who feel school is unsafe, and socioeconomic challenges that limit access to academic resources. For example, Sander (2001) argued,

> Although Catholic schools are probably not better than public schools on the average, some Catholic schools are probably superior to the public schools in a community. This is probably the case for Blacks and Hispanics in big cities. Catholic schools in inner-city areas that disproportionately serve a low-income population are probably more efficient than public schools, at least at the high school level. Blacks and Hispanics in inner-city areas gain from Catholic schooling. They have substantially higher high school graduation rates and do more homework if they attend Catholic schools…. I could not show significant gains for white students in Catholic schools. (pp. 22–23)

While there has been disagreement over private religious schools' benefits in suburban and rural areas, there is overwhelming evidence that urban Black and Latinx students and low-SES (often a proxy for Black and Latinx) students have higher academic achievement than their public school counterparts (Fenzel & Domingues, 2009; Jeynes, 2005; Neal, 1998; Sander, 2001). Focusing on heavily populated areas as a location to understand the benefits of private religious schools makes sense because previous research on public schools in urban environments has suggested that minority and low-SES students in these areas are most at risk for not completing school.

Further, the positive findings in urban locations demand attention. Neal (1998) reported that "urban minorities attending Catholic secondary schools experience a 26% point increase in the probability of graduating from high school" (p. 80). Fenzel and Domingues (2009) found that urban, public middle school students performed below

Catholic school students from similar backgrounds. Jeynes (2002, 2005, 2010) argued that private religious schools and religiosity, religious activities other than religious school, have the potential to bridge the achievement gap for Black, Latinx, and low-SES students. In a meta-analysis of 13 studies in which authors examined the link between religious schools and academic achievement of low-SES students in K-12 private religious schools and data from the 1992 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS 1992), Jeynes (2005) found significant positive effects across standardized achievement measures (reading, math, science) for minority students who attended private religious rather than public schools. Further, Jeynes suggested that low-SES students in private religious schools were less likely to be left back or drop out than their nonreligious school counterparts, though this finding was just short of being statistically significant. Using NELS 1992 (12^{th}-grade) data, Jeynes (2002) found that when SES and gender were controlled for, Black and Latinx students attending religious schools achieved at higher rates and were more likely to take core courses than their counterparts in nonreligious schools. The findings confirm that by attending private religious schools, Black and Latinx students and low-SES students who are most at risk of dropping out and who have the most to gain from attending private religious schools are in environments that promote academic achievement.

Though the effects of private religious schools on minority achievement in urban areas are promising, some researchers have been more skeptical. Benveniste et al. (2003) suggested that there is little proof of an academic achievement benefit for students attending private school and that private and public schools are more or less equal except for private schools' advantages in ability selection (the idea that minority students who

are selected for private religious schools already have greater abilities than do students in public schools). Keith and Page (1985) examined ability selection and initially suggested that the data used for comparing Black and Latinx students taken from the *High School and Beyond* data set, which many researchers who have published on the topic have used, inadequately controlled for student ability and inflated the findings. However, after reexamining the causal links, controlling for both background and ability, Keith and Page revised their claim and declared, contradictory to their original concern regarding ability selection bias, that there exist significant benefits in academic achievement for Black and Latinx students who attend Catholic schools.

Positive Teacher-Student Relationships as an Academic Resource

Because sociocultural norms are different for Black and Latinx students and because teachers have been found to hold different expectations of Black and Latinx students, educators are more likely to perceive minority students as more disruptive or deviant than their White counterparts (Ferguson, 2000; Morris, 2007; Muhammad & Dixson, 2008).[8] As a result, Black and Latinx students receive more negative discipline in the form of surveillance, referrals, and suspensions **(**Gregory et al., 2006). It should then be expected that Black middle school students perceive teachers as less willing to help them and that the students are less willing to seek help than their White counterparts

[8] It should be noted that the experience of school is different for male and female students and that for the purposes of this study, the data on gender remain aggregate because the findings are significant across gender. There is significant evidence that gender plays a role in K-12 educational success, specifically that Black and Latino males are less likely to be promoted (see Morris, 2007, and Noguera, 2003).

(Shirley & Cornell, 2011). Shirley and Cornell (2011) argued that the result of Black students' feeling less secure and thus less likely to ask for support was that teachers suspended them about 3.5 times more often than their White counterparts and that Black students were referred for discipline about 2.25 more times despite only being 20% of the student population compared with 60% for White students. The authors emphasized how teacher-student relationships operate differently depending on the students' race. Further, Shirley and Cornell provided evidence that racially diverse students' perceptions of school climate, the relations between students and educators, and the extent to which students consider school supportive or threatening can accurately indicate whether Black and Latinx students are disciplined for their classroom behaviors more frequently than their White counterparts. Teachers who perceive minority students as problematic, commonly described as students who are disengaged or deviant, create a cycle of negative reciprocity that encourages students to engage even less at school (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Further, based on this research, it is plausible, even likely, that in such academic spaces where teachers perceive racially diverse students as problematic, culturally responsive pedagogies that are effective in engaging minority students go unused and instead, teachers choose colorblind approaches that reinforce disengagement. If a cycle of negative reciprocity exists, it would suggest that because engagement mediates teacher-student relationships, racially diverse students perceive teacher-student relationships as less positive than do their White classmates (Fan et al., 2011).

One of the reasons racially diverse students do better in private religious schools may be linked to the caring quality of teacher-student relationships. Tosolt (2010) found that Black fifth- through eighth-grade private school students perceived teachers "who

behaved like a friend or family member" as caring teachers. Students in Tosolt's data set perceived interpersonal and affective relationships as caring and stated that the teacher "cares if I am sick or hurt or worried about something" and "she challenges me to do my best" (p. 149). Tosolt's findings pointed toward the potential for private religious schools, which hold as part of their values the concept of school as extended family, to establish caring teacher-student relationship that are more familial than those in public schools because the public schooling structure does not allow for this relationship style. Whereas public schools have often prioritized achievement and testing, in contrast, private religious schools and their teachers have prioritized their relationships around nonacademic values such as global citizenship, religion, safety, and discipline (Rothstein et al., 1999). This focus on nonacademic values may be more suited to developing caring pedagogies including familial teacher-student relationships and conversations that are inclusive of race and religion, which are often treated as taboo in public school landscapes (Subedi, 2006).

Teacher-student relationships have been examined across the fields of psychology and education to better understand how affective variables such as caring and warmth promote racially diverse students' academic engagement. There is strong evidence to suggest that teacher behaviors that affirm students' cultural and academic identities have a positive lasting impact on students' academic achievement and engagement and, further, foster positive perceptions of school (Cohen et al., 2009; Cornelius-White, 2007; Hallinan, 2008; Roorda et al., 2011; Valenzuela, 1999). In research examining classroom experiences and in this research, teacher-student relationships are understood as teachers' ability to foster relationships with students; thus the student and learning variables

become outcomes of the relationships (Cornelius-White, 2007; Roorda et al., 2011). This definition places primacy on the teacher-student relationship over other characteristics (i.e., peers, family makeup, socioeconomic level) as the most impactful factor in racially diverse students' academic engagement. It emphasizes that while other structural, student, or school-level variables have varying influence on students, none holds the magnitude of influence of teacher-student relationships and, therefore, the greatest promise for promoting student success (Brewster & Bowen, 2004).

Teacher-student relationships have the potential to be positive or negative. Positive teacher-student relationships for racially diverse students may be understood as those quality relationships that affirm cultural identity and ways of knowing, value students' lived experiences and modes of expression, and are indicators of students' perceptions of high levels of teacher caring. Negative teacher-student relationships for racially diverse students are related to colorblind or meritocratic approaches that require assimilation of minority students to White norms and often indicate academic spaces with high levels of disciplinary action and low attendance. Research has suggested that positive teacher-student relationships outweigh negative relationships over the K-12 schooling experience (Roorda et al., 2011). Cornelius-White (2007) found that affective relationships with teachers students perceive as caring promote a broad range of academic behaviors including positive cognitive (i.e., critical/creative thinking, math achievement, and verbal achievement) and positive behavioral (i.e., student satisfaction, dropout prevention, and positive motivation) outcomes. Further, the long-term impacts of positive teacher-student relationships on students in private religious schools and in public schools appear to be cumulative (Jeynes, 2005; Roorda et al., 2011). This is

important in the discussion of caring teacher-student relationships as a resource in private religious schools, the majority of which are K-8 or K-12, because the increased continuity across grade level and the possibilities of extended relationships with familiar teachers may partially explain why racially diverse students attending private religious schools achieve at higher academic levels than their public school counterparts.

Roorda et al. (2011) suggested that negative teacher-student relationships are most detrimental for student engagement in classroom learning activities and not academic achievement during primary school years. Authors of another study on student-perceived teacher support and its impact on Latinx middle and high school students found that teacher support, significantly more than parental support, dissipated negative classroom behaviors and increased students' liking of school (Brewster & Bowen, 2004). Further, Brewster and Bowen (2004) suggested that positive teacher-student relationships promote a greater mediating effect for racially diverse youth than for their White counterparts and that these relationships function as a classroom resource by diminishing disruptive behaviors and increasing attendance. In support of the effect of positive teacher-student relationships, Furrer and Skinner (2003) suggested that teacher-student relationships are strong predictors of student achievement and motivation. In a longitudinal study of 641 third- through sixth grade-students from working-class and middle-class, suburban-rural school districts, Furrer and Skinnner found that "relatedness" to social partners (teachers, parents, peers) was a motivational resource for students and that relatedness in the fall, particularly from teacher reports, was a strong predictor of student academic engagement in spring regardless of grade level:

> Children who felt appreciated by teachers were more likely to report that involvement in academic activities was interesting and fun and that they

> felt happy and comfortable in the classroom. In contrast, children who felt unimportant or ignored by teachers reported more boredom, unhappiness, and anger while participating in learning activities. (p. 159)

These data suggest that caring teachers have the potential to promote students' academic engagement and that teachers who establish caring relationships with students are providing a tangible resource for academic attainment that mediates the potential assimilation and deconstruction of racially diverse students' ethnic and cultural identities. The findings are further supported by two large meta-analyses by Cornelius-White (2007) and Roorda et al. (2011), who argued that positive teacher-student relationships affect students' engagement, creative thinking, and basic learning, and are responsible for reducing negative classroom behaviors and dropout.

Cornelius-White (2007) and Roorda et al. (2011) provided rigorous and expansive synthesis of the data by examining the impacts of teacher-student relationships across multiple variables and outcomes. Cornelius-White's (2007) data was the outcome of 119 studies conducted between 1948 and 2004, with 1,450 findings and approximately 355,325 students including large numbers of Caucasian, Black, Latinx, and Filipino participants; the majority of students were pre-K through 12, but studies extended to Grade 20. Roorda et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis was drawn from a concentrated and recent data pool comprising 99 studies conducted between 1990 and 2011 that covered grade levels K-12 with a total of 129,423 students. One difference in Roorda et al.'s research was that the contemporary nature of the data was likely to be more reflective of cultural shifts across society; as a result, the data had the potential to more accurately inform the current classroom experience. The authors also focused more specifically on subsets of both teacher behaviors and student outcomes that concentrated "on the affective dimension of relationships between teachers and individual children" including negative

teacher-student relationships (Roorda et al., 2011, p. 515).

Both Cornelius-White (2007) and Roorda et al. (2011) found that teachers with positive teacher-student relationships were more likely to show caring behaviors that diminished power struggles. These findings were supported in one of the few studies that included research on teacher-student relationships, race, and private religious school. Schmakel (2008) found that racially diverse seventh-grade urban parochial school students preferred instruction that was relevant and challenging and that these students felt there was "a definite connection between interesting schoolwork, interesting teachers, learning, and better grades" (p. 735). Students who identified instruction as relevant and challenging were also likely to perceive their teachers as caring (Wiggan, 2008). Additionally, Schmakel (2008) found that these attributes were not limited to high achievers: The findings held for both high and low achievers who had equal expectations of teachers, and the low achievers also indicated that they cared about their academic achievements. Further, Roorda et al. (2011) found that the quality of teacher-student relationships had the greatest impact on students who were at academic risk (minority students, low SES students, students with learning difficulties). The association between positive teacher-student relationships and academic achievement was stronger for minority students, and negative relationships were level across all students (Roorda et al., 2011). My research takes an initial step toward understanding how teacher-student relationships are operationalized and become effective mechanisms for promoting the academic engagement of racially diverse students.

The convergence of data on positive teacher-student relationships suggests that these relationships promote the academic achievement of racially diverse students in

majority White public and private religious schools. These positive relationships appear to foster Black and Latinx students' perceptions of liking school while at the same time, mediating the negative effects of alienation that many minority students have reported. One hypothesis for the positive effect of teacher-student relationships on academic engagement may be the result of affirming racially diverse students' cultural identities rather than deconstructing or diminishing them. The indications were that teacher-student relationships in which caring is present have the potential to outweigh or at least effectively buffer the challenge diverse students face in navigating race in majority White schools that do not reflect the racial, cultural, or socioeconomic experiences of their home lives. It is critical for research to more narrowly focus on understanding the perceptions of racially diverse students and the associations between teacher-student relationships and academic engagement across variables of religion, SES, and gender in majority White, private religious school contexts in order to benefit from what private religious schools appear to be getting right.

How Students Describe Teacher-Student Relationships

The marginalized status of racially diverse students in majority White, private religious schools suggests that their voices and experiences are not accounted for in the research and, as a result, are left out of educational practice and policy debates that have significant impacts on their lives and on society. It is possible to make visible the pedagogical practices that promote minority students' academic engagement by examining the classroom experiences that these students have identified as effective. Racially diverse students' narratives offer an opportunity to complicate the construction

of studenthood by revealing students' complex understanding of belonging and exclusion at school. Such narratives shine a light on the potential effects of caring teacher-student relationships by providing data on how students with racialized identities navigate multiple positionalities in order to achieve their academic aspirations. For example, Malcolm, a Black male student attending an elite, majority White private high school with a religious foundation shared:

> Most of the African American children at my school don't live around the area like most of the white children do, so they [the white students] don't really understand what goes on with the whole being black in my school. I like to think of it as a bubble.…Being a black student at Wells, mainly because it seems like I'm taken in the bubble and taken out of the bubble, but still when I go there I have to be considered part of that community, and when I come home I still have to be considered part of that community, and it's a very fragile situation just like the bubble. (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007, p. 32)

Malcolm's insight made transparent the challenge diverse students face in negotiating racial and academic identities in school spaces where notions of colorblindness or meritocracy can hinder their academic pursuits by constructing and equating minority students' experiences with those of White students. Using the trope of the bubble, Malcolm articulated how students of color attending majority White schools often describe the need to construct studenthood in a way that simultaneously accounts for their in-school experiences and lives outside of school. He identified the problem that students of color face balancing the contextual expectations of the dominant culture and one's own cultural, ethnic, and religious practices. The bubble is Malcolm's way of expressing, in his experience of studenthood, a Du Boisian double consciousness: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others….One feels his two-ness" (Du Bois, 1897, p. 2). While some educators would argue that colorblindness provides a remedy, these students experience

constructing racially diverse students of color as the same as their White peers as alienating. Teacher practices that support colorblind approaches normalize whiteness and position racially diverse students as deficient. In the process, they transform educational institutions into spaces where academic success for racially diverse students requires assimilation to a White academic norm. Valenzuela (1999, 2008) suggested that Latinx students are often confronted with the choice between their school and home identities; she argued that they experience "subtractive schooling" environments that require students to choose between teacher-prescribed academic identities that reproduce constructs of White privilege and those of the students' home cultures, ethnicities, and religions. When teachers take colorblind approaches, they are knowingly or unknowingly presenting studenthood as a mutually exclusive choice between academic and home identities. Schools (students, teachers, parents) are vulnerable to the psychosocial experiences of their communities and of society in general. What Malcolm and other racially diverse students tell about their educational experience provides a counter-story that is often absent in educational research. These counter-stories are valuable because they maintain the power to disrupt dominant narratives that assume that the experiences of racially diverse students are the same as White students'. In this paper, I provide qualitative research that brings into discussion racially diverse students' perceptions about caring and teacher-student relationships.

One area in racially diverse students' private religious school experiences that deserves deeper examination is the intersection that informs if and how culturally responsive pedagogies foster teacher-student relationships. While research has made the argument that positive teacher-student relationships can promote minority students'

academic achievement, how these relationships are initiated and operate in private religious school landscapes is worth exploring more thoroughly. A way to understand what is operating within these relationships is to critically listen to the stories and descriptors that racially diverse students use to articulate effective teaching practices. These students have acknowledged the importance of teacher caring and of the teacher as an extension of family as resources for their academic engagement (Howard, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999, 2008). Howard's (2001, 2002) research provided a frame for understanding the value of counter-stories in examining teacher-student relationships. Howard (2002), in a qualitative study of 30 (17 boys and 13 girls) Black, urban elementary and middle school students who were purposefully selected to represent a spectrum of academic and classroom behaviors and achievement levels found that these students described effective teachers as those who cared in a way that "stressed the fluidity of home-to-school characteristics." As Nicole, one of the students, explained, "It's the little things that a teacher can do that shows how much he cares. For example, if we miss the bus sometimes, Baba Jones, who lives all the way on the north side, will give us a ride home even though we live all the way on the south side" (Howard, 2002, p. 436). In this example, Nicole identified her teacher, Baba Jones, as caring in a familial way.

Like Nicole's relationship with Baba Jones, teacher-student relationships that are perceived as caring by Black and Latinx students have been shown to be academic resources that promote constructive classroom behaviors, increase minority students' engagement, and reduce dropout for students at academic risk (Davis & Dupper, 2012; Sanders, 1998). Student examples of teacher caring highlight behaviors such as taking an

interest in a student's home life that reach beyond teachers' academic instructional roles. In research involving 50 fifth- through eighth-grade students in an urban private school (whether it was faith based is not stated), Tosolt (2010) found that students perceived caring teacher behaviors across three categories: 1) academic, 2) fairness, and 3) interpersonal. Forty-five percent of the behaviors fell into the category of interpersonal caring (e.g., a teacher who behaved like a family member), 37% of the behaviors were academic (e.g., insists on my doing my best work), and only 18% fell into the category of fairness (e.g., intervenes when other kids are picking on me). Further, Tosolt suggested that Black students were "more likely to value caring that helped them achieve greater academic success, while White students were more likely to value caring that built strong interpersonal relationships" (p. 148). Black students in Tosolt's study emphasized academic rigor over interpersonal relationships, suggesting that racially diverse students have a sophisticated understanding of school as a tool to achieve academic aspirations but not as a location that welcomes their cultural or home identities. This difference in students' perceived needs, racially diverse students' desiring academic caring and White students' desiring interpersonal caring, raises many questions. One of the more salient, considering Malcolm's articulation of the private school bubble, which separated school and home, and Nicole's stated desire for school and home to be more familial or blended, is whether racially diverse students feel they belong and thus, whether they are comfortable bringing their academic and cultural identities into the classroom.

Do racially diverse students perceive that they belong in majority White, private religious schools? Contrary to the expectation that racially diverse students might feel alien in private religious schools that are majority White, some private school students'

narratives suggest that these schools provide teacher resources that mediate the racial discontinuity that students feel. For example, that private religious school students have better behavior (a nonacademic measure) than their public school counterparts may suggest that religious schools upset normative constructions of minority students as deficient. That racially diverse, urban religious school students seek academic instruction that they perceive as culturally germane and academically demanding may suggest that high levels of teacher empathy and trust motivate these students' learning (Schmakel, 2008). Fenzel and Domingues (2009) examined urban Black middle school students at Nativity School and traditional Catholic schools and discovered that Nativity School "students perceived their math and language arts teachers to be more supportive and task oriented…" and "less likely than comparison school students to express concerns about the ways their teachers treated them" (p. 46). It may be that the organization of private religious schools around religion or shared values that go beyond academic concerns provides a unifying construct for caring and a sense of belonging that benefits racially diverse students.

Racially diverse students' perceptions suggest that private religious schools, in their ability to foster positive teacher-student relationships that are caring and familial, provide a resource for academic engagement. These schools are in a unique position to maximize the prosocial benefits of shared values and school characteristics in order to promote culturally responsive pedagogies that foster student belonging and academic success. It would be unjust to ignore data that suggest that racially diverse students benefit from the positive effects of private religious school and that these school environments are predictive of academic engagement and at least partially mediate the

negative effect of meritocracy and colorblindness. Because some research on Black and Latinx students' academic achievement has found that these students achieve at higher levels if they attend urban private religious schools, there is a need for further investigation to understand how teaching practices in these academic environments operate to affirm students' academic and cultural identities.

By organizing data using a culturally responsive theory of care and exploring student and teacher perspectives, my research provides an understanding of how racially diverse students in majority White, private Jewish schools navigate race at school. This research on private Jewish schooling benefits from previous research that has defined ways in which teacher-student relationships serve as an academic resource for racially diverse students because they provide an established set of findings that define the terrain and a foundation on which to determine if similar resources are available in private Jewish schools. My research has suggested that teacher-student relationships are related to caring pedagogies and that at a particular private Jewish school, caring is activated in a way that is similar to those identified in research on public and private religious schools. The data indicated that racially diverse students at this private Jewish school are likely to have a strong sense of belonging, a result of being able to bring their complex identities into the classroom in order to resolve part of the academic and cultural separation in identity that is described by many racially diverse students attending K-12 schools in America.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

In this chapter, I describe the methodological framework I used to collect and analyze the data. I begin by reviewing the research questions, exploring how my positionality shaped the areas of investigation, and introducing the location in which the research took place. I then provide an overview of the research design and explore my process for collecting and analyzing the data.

Review of the Research Questions

The reason for this investigation was to explore if racially diverse students in K-8 private Jewish schools identified the presence of caring teacher-student relationships and how they articulated the operationalization of these relationships in the classroom. In addition, I sought to understand how teachers articulated their use of pedagogies that promoted caring teacher-student relationships toward fostering academic engagement. At this time it may be helpful to revisit the research questions that framed this investigation:

1. Do racially diverse students in a majority White, K-8 private Jewish school perceive teacher-student relationships as caring?
2. What characteristics do racially diverse students use to articulate how

caring teacher-student relationships are operationalized and do they identify a connection to their academic engagement?

3. What pedagogical practices do teachers articulate in establishing caring teacher-student relationships with racially diverse students in a majority White, K-8 private Jewish school?

My Positionality

One of the challenges of this research project was that little attention has been paid to how racially diverse students experience schooling in private Jewish schools. That this location had little visibility is in part why I at times had to draw connections about the data based on conclusions reached in other research contexts. My own experience reading the data and then reflecting on it in a way that effectively connected it to existing research positioned me as an active participant in its formation. As a result, it is impossible for me to be considered an objective observer or to make null how my life experience as an off-white Jewish male informed the research process. Critiquing my own life in an effort to comprehend where I draw my K-8 knowledge from is important in understanding how I approached the research. While my life's experiences influenced all aspects of my research, the intersection of my K-8 experience of studenthood, being the White father of Black children, and the literature that is the foundation of this research study provided overlapping lenses through which I pieced together the data in my analysis.

My off-white experience of studenthood

Growing up in an unlikely place to be Jewish resulted in my public elementary school experience of whiteness being more "off-white" than White; I was, to my knowledge, the only Jewish kid at school. My agricultural town was home to a KKK Grand Dragon for the state of California and plenty of white supremacist youth. While anti-Semitic statements or the occasional scuffle kept me aware of my tenuous space at school, my cultural otherness in the eyes of my Mexican friends made it okay to hang with them. I was, as they called me, their *jato*, a clever shortening of "Jewish *vato*." My friends and their families understood my otherness in ways that I did not fully comprehend myself at that age. I walked between worlds with Latinx and White students at school and around town. When we were walking home from school, if *la migra* (Border Patrol) was spotted, I ran with my Mexican friends; yet there is no doubt that in the classroom, teachers held the same expectations of me as they did other White students. It was an expectation punctuated by the occasional "Jesus loves you too" statement that never quite felt as fully welcoming as its intended claim to let me know "it is okay that you are Jewish cause you are still one of us." Of course, I was not one of them; I was being raised by a single mom with a master's degree who taught Spanish and ESL in a neighboring school district and schlepped me back to Florida to visit my grandparents for Passover because religious and cultural traditions were important to maintaining a Jewish identity.

I draw on my experience of studenthood in elementary school as a source of empathy for the experience of racially diverse students. To clarify, I do not consider my experience to be the same as theirs: Even if *la migra* caught me, I knew I would not have

been deported. Those moments serve as an access point to aspects of otherness that are common in the experiences of racially diverse students. In part, my desire to include race as an organizing principle of this research was driven by my own bias that race is significant in determining the school experiences of students of color, and also because there exists a need for culturally caring pedagogies to be practiced by K-12 teachers in order to disrupt narratives of colorblindness and meritocracy and ensure that schooling is not a subtractive experience for racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse students. Culturally responsive caring provides a framework for purposeful inclusion of culturally specific knowledge that when used by teachers set the foundation for caring teacher-student relationships. In my observations of caring teacher-student relationships, it was powerful to reflect on my experience of otherness and the ways in which teachers at David Ben-Gurion Jewish Community Day School used or failed to use a framework of culturally responsive caring to understand the experiences of racially diverse students at school. The teacher practices emphasized affective interactions, cultural affirmation, and Jewish culture as a structural resource of the school.

Makes me wanna holler

"Mommy, I am a black Labrador!" My wife and I were watching *101 Dalmatians* with our daughter, Lilah, who was 3 years old, when she jumped to her feet and exclaimed her newly found identity. If you know the movie, you might guess that Lilah's relational inference came during the scene where the typically white and spotted Dalmatians cover themselves in black chimney soot to pass as black Labrador retrievers. It is a moment in a Disney film, a white dog disguising itself as a black dog, whose irony

might go unnoticed in a White household: But it is not so in any household with people whose skin color sets them apart from the majority of White America. The moment we adopted Lilah (two years later, we would adopt Jaspar), we became a Black household. It was our choice to adopt Ethiopian children—it was not our choice to have a complete stranger in the grocery store sneak up to the cart and begin touching my daughter's hair while stammering, "I've never touched hair like hers" as though it made her assault of my child acceptable. It took only a matter of weeks for us to realize that raising Ethiopian Jewish children in Utah would be unfair, and this concern was exacerbated when we looked into the public school that was a two-block walk from our house. A terrific school by all of the standard measurements, it was also more than 80% White, and that year, Lilah would have been the only Black child in her grade and one of only a handful of Black children at the K-6 school. We picked cities with Ethiopian and Jewish populations, and the first job opportunity set us packing to a community where our children's racial diversity would be common—a place where other kids on the playground would look like our kids.

The construction of whiteness as normative has consequences for our family. It makes me wanna holler that, whether it is the promotion of whiteness through movie characters or the behaviors of a stranger in the grocery store, the reach of whiteness inappropriately and inadequately defines my children's lives and what is accessible or not. I am acutely aware that in a society that recognizes me as a White male, I benefit from and contribute to the construction of systemic racism. As the dad of two Black Jewish children, I work to limit its footprint. Fatherhood is, for me, a dialogic with my own privilege in order to establish space for my children to self-identify and affirm their

racial, cultural, and religious identities. As a dad, I want my kids' classrooms to be problem-posing culturally affirmative spaces complete with kids who look like them and where they get to choose their friends rather than just have the friends who choose them. This concept is so strong a guiding principle for my family that we disrupt other aspirations to ensure that we live in communities where we fit. As an educator and researcher, I am deeply concerned that K-12 teachers remain uncomfortable in recognizing their own biases and admitting that their practices may be different for racially diverse students and, as a result, attributing academic engagement as dependent on factors outside of the classroom rather than on their own pedagogy (Noguera, 2006). Based on literature on public and private schools, my research findings attest that caring teacher-student relationships are a significant resource in establishing culturally affirming classrooms in majority White schools and that private Jewish schools may have attributes that make them effective in achieving this outcome. Choosing a methodology that combined grounded theory and culturally responsive caring allowed for students' narratives to provide answers to how racially diverse students perceive the characteristics that activate caring teacher-student relationships. These liberated narratives were effective in identifying the characteristics of teacher practices that were perceived as caring and that operated to affirm racial and cultural identity in the classroom at a majority White private Jewish school. The methodology allowed me to affirm that race matters in the classroom and that just as I must contend with my liberal beliefs as a White male educator and researcher, talented K-12 teachers must also critique their own pedagogy in order to effectively respond to the needs of students of color.

(Re)constructing the known

The (re)construction of my understandings about how the intersection of religion, race, culture, gender, and SES determine how students of color experience schooling was shaped by my academic studies and literature in the field of K-12 education. That teachers may knowingly and unknowingly oppress racially diverse students by failing to provide caring relationships that have the capacity to be culturally affirming is problematic because it is an act of violence, not a theoretical exploitation, that limits the likelihood of academic completion and access to higher education and as a result leads to a higher probability of poverty that has detrimental effects on students' lives and society. For example, that second-generation or beyond Latinx students have a dropout rate that hovers around 24% is a challenge that must be met through more affirmative schooling that can be achieved through a combination of pedagogy and school structure (Fashola, Slavin, & Calderon, 2001). It is important to make transparent that systemic racism organizes the classroom and that what Bonilla-Silva (2014) refers to as "discursive buffers" and "semantic moves" are part of the vernacular in K-12 schools. A colorblind vernacular is challenging because it maintains narratives that privilege whiteness without being overtly racist. Freire (2016) raised a similar concern for the challenge teachers face in (re)constructing their understandings. If activist teachers are going to establish caring teacher-student relationships, then they must also bravely (re)construct their own understandings of race and disrupt teaching that relies on their knowledge in favor of caring practices that call on students as coauthors, or what Freire (2016) referred to as "co-investigators," as one way to affirm the authentic knowledge of racially diverse students.

My academic studies and the research literature supported my own (re)construction of a narrative of racially diverse students by introducing complications that included conceptions of instructional deficits and systemic racism that determine the availability of teacher and structural resources in the K-12 academic landscape. Because the literature provides a counter-narrative to why students succeed or fail, culturally responsive caring was an effective framework for investigating the experiences of students at David Ben-Gurion in a manner that that allowed for critically examining the ways in which teacher practices and the school structure affirmed racially diverse students' identities. The combination of my experience of K-12 schooling, my desire as a father to take an activist role in having affirmative schooling experiences for his Black children, and the literature explored in this project provided a foundation for critiquing my own assumptions and more effectively understanding the data.

Research Location

David Ben-Gurion Jewish Community Day School provides a composite profile of an accredited independent, coeducational, 501c3 school serving grades kindergarten through eighth grade; it is a pluralistic environment that for over 20 years has existed as a Jewish day school that fosters Jewish traditions and values. Tuition at David Ben-Gurion is around $16,500 per year, although tuition reduction based on financial need is available. The campus culture and curricula are designed to develop critical thinking, exploration of one's identity, and respect for student diversity. The school has a majority White, Ashkenazi student body; roughly 7% of the school is racially diverse and according to school records currently includes Chinese, Latinx, and Persian students; the

multicultural makeup of the student body is similar to what might be found at other coeducational pluralistic Jewish day schools. The faculty is White and female, which is common among private religious schools and elementary schools in general. Such a research location put in play the types of attributes that frequently result in racially diverse students' academic disengagement and feeling like they do not belong. DeCuir-Gunby (2007) suggested that teachers in majority White schools may construct Black and Latinx students as alien, and previous research findings suggest that such a location is likely to foster feelings of alienation or otherness that are likely to negatively affect racially diverse students' sense of belonging and hinder these students' ability to achieve caring student-teacher relationships (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Because David Ben-Gurion presented itself as a location where students and administrators perceive caring teacher-student relationships, it served as a case study of how such relationships may function as student resources in private Jewish schools.

Colorblind teaching practices

Teachers who are part of a society that promotes colorblindness and meritocracy as a way of addressing racial, cultural, and ethnic differences are likely to replicate these normative beliefs in their classrooms. When teachers "do not see color," they are colluding in affirming whiteness as a cultural norm that works to oppress students of color (Silva, 2014; Thompson, 1998). That teachers maintain a discomfort with racial, religious, and cultural differences is problematic in establishing K-12 classrooms that affirm racially diverse students. Even though teachers may hold different expectations of racially diverse students, typically that they are less engaged or deviant, at David Ben-

Gurion the resources to create caring teacher-student relationships remained available.

The complexity of caring teacher-student relationships is not easily resolved by simply finding a location that appears to "do the right thing." David Ben-Gurion is not a "how to" model, and nor is it a school where racial equality is ever-present. On the contrary, in many situations, teachers engaged in behaviors or shared perspectives that expressed liberal notions of colorblindness; that teachers at David Ben-Gurion maintained these notions may be problematic because it indicates a discomfort in talking about racial diversity that prevents teachers from establishing caring teacher-student relationships. Further, the social conditions and power relationships that are replicated through colorblind pedagogies reinforce societal norms of white privilege. What previous research findings teach is that despite teachers' suggesting that Black and Latinx students are the same as White students, differences in teacher-student relationships result in these students' perceiving teachers as less caring and in teachers' perceiving these students as not behaving appropriately in the classroom (Cornelius-White, 2007; Roorda et al., 2011; Tosolt, 2010). While many teachers describe themselves as caring, if their students do not receive them as caring, then the positive benefits of a caring pedagogy remain inoperative (Noddings, 2005; Tosolt, 2009). On the other hand, the value of caring affective relationships is that they have been shown to predict behaviors that foster academic success including positive work habits, fewer disciplinary infractions, and increased positive communications between students and teachers, the outcome of which is higher levels of academic engagement by racially diverse students (Cornelius-White, 2007; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Roorda et al., 2011).

It is clear that at David Ben-Gurion, teachers play a role in the construction of

student identities and that because White norms are dominant in our culture, racially diverse students are at times constructed as being the same as White students. It was also evident that racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion actively engaged multiple identities, switching between their home and school identities as a way of navigating studenthood. The additional stress of having to simultaneously maintain a home identity and a school identity may, as Valenzuela (1999) warned, create a subtractive schooling environment that could result in teachers' developing narratives of racially diverse students as oppositional or deviant. While the research location provided evidence of the need for racially diverse students to switch between home and school identities, and it appeared that teacher-constructed identities were present and at times resisted, teachers frequently engaged caring teacher-student relationships that were an academic resource for racially diverse students.

It should not be surprising that racially diverse students sought caring teacher-student relationships that were coconstructed around the concept of students as global citizens rather than being singularly academic in nature. Valenzuela (1999) suggested that teachers' shift in focus from academic to student as citizen may be sufficient for racially diverse students to recognize an "authentic form of caring that emphasizes the relations of reciprocity between teachers and students … That is, authentically caring teachers are seized by their students and energy flows towards their projects and needs" (p. 61). At David Ben-Gurion, this type of authentic care is achieved in the classroom through caring teacher-student relationships and further supported through the campus culture. Students' expressions of their authentic identities were integral to developing caring teacher-student relationships because they were not seeking to be coddled. Rather, as Noddings (2005)

suggested, racially diverse students need to "be received, to elicit a response that is congruent with an underlying need or desire" (p. 17).

Roorda et al. (2011), in studying the benefits of affective teacher-student relationships, suggested that one of the reasons "at risk" students do well in caring schools is that the students' needs for belonging are met, which allows for teachers and students to develop reciprocal positive relationships. Further, because David Ben-Gurion is K-8, the year-over-year relationships with teachers, administrators, and students increase stability and the opportunities for affective interactions with teachers that may have a cumulative effect on student engagement across the students' school tenures (Cornelius-White, 2007; Jeynes, 2005; Roorda et al., 2011). The caring teacher-student relationships I observed at David Ben-Gurion appeared to reflect the broader research findings about these relationships in that they appeared to directly increase students' engagement, autonomy, and competence (Roorda et al., 2011). This suggests that a qualitative exploration of how racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion perceive caring teacher-student relationships would provide insights about how to strengthen teacher practices in Jewish schools in order to meet the needs of all students and ensure that racially diverse students have a culturally caring place to go to school.

Cultural artifacts in the classroom

Valenzuela (1999) suggested that subtractive schooling environments are devoid of "important social and cultural resources, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure" (p. 3). Similarly, Ladson-Billings's (2009) concept of cultural relevance placed primacy on the idea that "culturally relevant teaching uses student

culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture" (p. 19). As Valenzuela (1999) and Ladson-Billings (2009) suggested, the presence of cultural artifacts in the classroom is integral to reinforcing racially diverse students' cultures as academic resources. At David Ben-Gurion, aspects of racial diversity are represented in classrooms through assignments and artifacts; these can be categorized as passive (artifacts indirectly relevant to racially diverse students' experiences) or active (assignments that produce artifacts that are directly relevant to these students' experiences). The artifacts that were visible on the days of my interviews and classroom observations represented the racial makeup of the school and in some examples went beyond students to include elements of cultural identity as part of global identity.

The diversity of the Jewish people is celebrated passively at David Ben-Gurion through the presence of the artifacts and actively where the artifacts were the result of student learning in the form of class projects. In one passive example, a Jewish calendar from an unknown publisher hangs on the wall and displays a picture of *Yeminite Boy* by the artist Reuven Rubin. While the presence of the artifact speaks to the diversity of the Jewish community, the included description, by an unknown author, emphasizes Yemenite Jews as other: "Considered exotic, they were greatly admired for their exceptional knowledge of the Torah and perfect pronunciation of Hebrew, despite their homeland being far from biblical lands." In this example, the exotification of Yemenite Jews, and by extension, of ethnically and racially diverse Jews, complicates the idea that the presence of images of Jews from diverse backgrounds is in and of itself strong enough to provide cultural resources for students of color. The mere presence of artifacts

of ethnically and racially diverse Jews without culturally responsive teaching practices has the potential to reinforce, rather than disrupt, tokenism, further alienating and oppressing diverse students.

Recognizing that tokenism is oppressive, it is also important that the presence of ethnic and racially diverse artifacts in the classroom promote racially diverse practices that can inform a discussion of customs and practices of Jews from diverse backgrounds. Such narratives that celebrate the ethnic and racial diversity of the Jewish people, for example, Sephardic practices of Passover or the unique histories of Ethiopian, Latinx, or Ugandan Jewry, may provide simultaneous senses of belonging and otherness for racially diverse students. How artifacts move beyond passive into active roles in teacher pedagogy at David Ben-Gurion is critical in shaping the caring teacher-student relationships and the transformative shift from otherness to belonging. The presence of artifacts that are culturally relevant and that suggest a diverse Jewish community provides a resource for teachers in normalizing the narratives of students of ethnic and racially diverse backgrounds so that they are visible and their intersectional identities become a part of the global Jewish community despite what is a White and Ashkenazi schooling environment that replicates white privilege as it is present in society. That the Jewish collective identity is one of diaspora, a global identity that is inclusive of every continent, disrupts binary notions of identity such as Ogbu's (2003) cultural frames that promotes a "black way" and "white way" of acting at school. It is in this construction of a Jewish global identity that teachers are able to promote the historic kinship of the Jewish people. This is evident at David Ben-Gurion in the school's foundational values, which identify *Klal Yisrael* as one of its core principles.

I saw the concept of *Klal Yisrael* being called on as a classroom resource by teachers who used assignments to operationalize the school's belief in students' being global citizens. In a salient student artifact this was represented in the Jewish value of *tikkun olam*. This particular artifact emphasized that Jews have a global responsibility to care for those in need even if they are different from us. Further, it brings into the classroom a complex conversation about the expansive reach of Jewish social service organizations that serve communities who are not Jewish as well as those that are. This particular student project used the word *shalom* (peace) to explore how the organization Jewish World Watch has responded to genocide and violence in Africa. It is a conversation that can be both inclusive and exclusive of Jewish communities in Africa and in exploring how genocide has affected the Jewish people. The visibility of such projects in the classroom is an example of how pedagogical practices conceptualize the school's desire to build global citizens. It also provides an understanding of racially diverse people as simultaneously other and part of the collective in the school's culture and practices as well as those of the Jewish people.

In learning about people and Jewish people who come from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, students become coconstructors of their own understandings and are able to confront their own and each other's misunderstandings about Jewish peoplehood. For students who are racially diverse, these narratives and the presence of such artifacts along with culturally responsive assignments makes relevant their historical and contemporary identities as part of the Jewish people. In this way, the organizing concept of *tikkun olam* operates similarly to the concept of "Christian personalism" that Bryk et al. (1993) suggested is a resource for diverse students in Catholic schools because "it is

an effective device to engage students in academic work but also because it signifies a moral conception of social behavior in a just community. As such, personalism makes claims on human endeavors to act, beyond individual interest, toward a greater good" (p. 301).

The representation of ethnic and racial diversity extends to a concept of Israel as artifact in the classroom; as an artifact Israel is mutable, a foundation for teachers to discuss the conception of the Jewish people, the worldwide Jewish community, as racially diverse and inclusive. This representation also provides an opportunity to challenge that inclusiveness with questions of equity across history and geography. Thus, the conception of *Klal Yisrael* disrupts the notion of Jews as solely White and from Eastern Europe.

While ethnic and racially diverse Jews benefit from a global concept of cultural community, it should be noted that so do White European Jews. In recognizing one's globalness, White Ashkenazi Jews maintain access to the advantages of whiteness in America. However, as Jacobson (1998) suggested, the concept of whiteness even for Eastern European Jews is complicated because Jews who are visible have a history of being identified as a race:

> Visible Jewishness in American culture between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries represented a complex process of social value *become* perception: social and political meanings attached to Jewishness generate a kind of physiognomical surveillance that renders Jewishness itself discernible as a particular pattern of physical traits (skin color, nose shape, hair color and texture, and the like … . The visible markers may then be interpreted as outer signs of an essential, immutable, inner moral intellectual character. (p. 174)

It is against this historical American backdrop that identifies Jewishness as both a religion and a race that the otherness of White European Jews is clarified. The Jewish

experience of being racialized in America establishes a kinship with other minority groups expressed culturally as off-whiteness and supports a historic orientation that teachers may use in establishing empathy for their racially diverse students. The availability of a narrative of otherness for both teachers and students and the presence of racially diverse cultural artifacts provides a mechanism to support shifting teacher practices from aesthetic to authentic relationships by establishing culturally responsive practices that support caring (Gay, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). The presence of multicultural artifacts has the advantage of increasing teachers' knowledge and comfort engaging in topics of racial identity. In this way cultural values and the racial diversity of the Jewish people is part of a classroom pedagogy that fosters teacher-student relationships that racially diverse students perceive as caring and respond to by exhibiting academic engagement.

Research Design

With this research study, I was particularly interested in the ways that racially diverse students in this private Jewish school perceived caring teacher-student relationships and how they articulated the attributes that formed these relationships. I chose a qualitative research approach that utilized grounded theory because it provided an effective method of exploring the experiences of racially diverse students in a K-12 educational landscape in which little previous research has been conducted. While the promotional effect of caring teacher-student relationships for racially diverse students in private Jewish schools has not been an area of study, previous research on teacher-student relationships, particularly students' identification of teacher behaviors that make for

effective teachers, shaped this research study (Decuir-Gunby, 2007; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Tosolt, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). I conducted my research using semi-structured interviews and observations; this process grounded the data in the intricate workings of teacher-student relationships and used student and teacher interviews to further define the research landscape.

Charmaz (2006) suggested that grounded theory is a way "for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (p. 2). For this study, the approach prioritized students' perceptions of caring teacher-student relationships around attributes they identified as held by caring teachers. Further, by including these teachers' perceptions of their own practices, I was able to more fully understand the relational aspects of caring teacher-student relationships. While the lived experiences of each student and teacher in this study are particular, the combination of perceptions provides a detailed composite description about what caring teachers do. By collecting qualitative data from multiple individual sources, I could provide a deeper understanding of the way students construct caring teachers.

The use of a culturally responsive caring as a theoretical framework supported a qualitative analytic methodology in its maintaining a race-conscious approach that prioritized racially diverse students' articulation on the benefits and formation of caring teacher-student relationships. Further, the methodology had the potential to interrogate commonly held assumptions about caring that perpetuate a colorblind approach by placing the subjects, researcher, and research on the schooling experiences of racially diverse students into conversation with each other. A qualitative approach does have limitations, and I recognize that it is imperfect in that each informant in the dialogic space

of subject, researcher, and research was also influenced by different cultural, political, ideological, and historical perspectives that were likely to reproduce oppression and maintain narratives that privilege whiteness and are essentialist in nature.

It was my intention that the theoretical framework, which purposefully established a race-conscious approach and culturally responsive caring, while it was imperfect, would complicate structures that promote colorblindness and oppression. While it is important to acknowledge that the dialogic gives voice to deficit orientations as well, the method entailed prioritizing racially diverse students' representations of effective teaching in order to amplify the positive findings of existing research. The use of a qualitative research method that prioritized the knowledge of racially diverse students supported a dialogic discourse and safeguarded against false claims of objectivity or neutrality by maintaining a multivocal consciousness (Brown, 2004; Horner, 2004). In their discourses, the students made heard what has gone unheard or worse ignored. In doing so, they called upon a chain of meaning that connected their understandings to historical forms of oppression that operate within colorblind teacher practices.

These students' voices are a call for a more just and democratic construction of education. They articulated understandings of how caring teacher-student relationships are formed and how they promote engagement at David Ben-Gurion Jewish Day School. Further, the combination of student and teacher interviews provided a way to check the data and understand what is being operationalized in the construction of caring teacher-student relationships. Understanding David Ben-Gurion as a bright-spot example where the presence of caring teacher-student relationships has been confirmed provided insight

into how to strengthen the pedagogical practices in other Jewish schools and move forward a deeper understanding of effective teacher practices that may hold value for private and public schools.

Site selection

One of the challenges of this research project that I encountered and that may be common in private schools was an institutional discomfort with approving research that required human subject waivers. This was generally voiced as a concern about disrupting the "trust" between families and the school. In my experience, trust in this situation was used as a euphemism for an institutional desire to avoid bothering families paying significant private school tuitions with an additional, perhaps irritating, request. On more than one occasion, it was suggested that the research be conducted in the classroom without human subject waivers. While these locations were not used for subject research, the administrators at these institutions shared an understanding and appreciation for the potential value of the research but were unyielding in their willingness to allow it to move forward with the required documentation.

In the responses from these institutions, I believe that what I experienced as a heightened sensitivity to the waivers was a result of the focus of my research centering on racially diverse students. While the specific reason remains unconfirmed, it is my belief that in part, establishing access to private Jewish schools as research locations was hindered by school administrators' unspoken concerns about the research topic. At one location, whose perspective may be representative of those held by other institutions, a school administrator declared, "We don't have any racially diverse students." When I

specifically asked the administrator if there were Latinx students, the administrator pushed back emphasizing a colorblind approach, which the administrator claimed teachers and students held. The administrator shared that the school does not see "those students as being of color" and that it would be surprising if the students "identified that way." Despite initial resistance, this administrator graciously provided access to the school. However, because of a lack of administrative support in reaching parents effectively, the research sample included only one student in a landscape where a potential of 10 students had been identified. The experience helped me understand that the conversation on race between the administration and racially diverse families is one that makes administrators uncomfortable.

This is an interesting opportunity for future research because the administration in Jewish schools is primarily responsible for determining the campus culture and core curricula that students encounter. It is unclear in the context of Jewish schools if parents of racially diverse students would have welcomed or shied away from this conversation or how they might have valued this research. Again, this too is an opportunity for further research that could inform how culture and race are understood at home and at Jewish schools. My use of race as a selection criterion was concerning enough that three institutions asked if the research could include White students too. The request was not made because of an interest in garnering data about White students, but rather from the perspective of protecting the administration against potential parental fallout from their having approved research on racially diverse students only. In this way, my experience accessing private Jewish schools as research locations revealed a systemic benefit to the schools in reinforcing conceptions of racially diverse students as the same as White

students.

The experience of being welcomed to research locations without the waivers, the institutional insistence on colorblindness, and the overarching desire to make the research about White students also led me to believe that a significant hindrance in accessing data on the experience of racially diverse students was some administrators' discomfort with talking about or seeking to understand racially diverse student experiences as different from their White classmates'. Overall, the experience of seeking access to research locations provided a deeper understanding of how carefully private Jewish schools navigate conversations about racially diverse students within their institutions. In many ways, the administrative discomfort talking critically about race and how racially diverse students navigate schooling differently than their White classmates strengthens the reason for why a deeper understanding of the experience of racially diverse students in private Jewish schools is needed. It also emphasized the importance of choosing research locations that would partner in framing the value of the research for families and developing multiple levels of stakeholder acceptance to move forward the data collection effort.

David Ben-Gurion Jewish Day School was representative of a partnership between the researcher and the administration that supported an existing school culture that valued a reflective learning process, making my presence as a researcher on campus transparent to the stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents, and students) and reinforcing the capture of authentic student data. During my preliminary observations at David Ben-Gurion, I was able to witness moments indicative of caring teacher-student relationships. In conversations with the administration, it was also evident that they

valued understanding how racially diverse students experienced caring teacher-student relationships. The administration was supportive and agreed to allow limited, supervised access for research on effective teaching practices.

Participants

The 10 students who participated in this study and whose data were included attended a K-8 private Jewish school in California. I selected a purposeful sample of third- through eighth-grade students to achieve diversity of backgrounds including racial and gender diversity and Jewish identification. I selected the students from classrooms the head of the school had determined had teachers who were highly effective in establishing caring teacher-student relationships. Table 1 provides demographic information about the 10 students who participated in the study. I made this selection to increase the likelihood of including students whose perspectives would generally be reflective of racially diverse students in grades three through eight in private non-Orthodox Jewish schools in America.

Table 1
Student Participant Demographics

Name (pseudonyms)	Race	Gender	Grade
Eli	Chinese	M	8
Samuel	Chinese	M	6
Rubén	Latino	M	6
Alejandra	Latina	F	5
Octavio	Latino	M	5
Lenore	Latina	F	4
Juan	Latino	M	4
Lew	Chinese	M	3
Rita	Chinese	F	3
Raquel	Latina	F	3

I selected the teachers who participated in this study because their classrooms included students whose data would be used in the research. All five teachers included in the research were White and female and had taught at David Ben-Gurion previously; again, all names were changed:

Teacher Caryn had taught at David Ben-Gurion for 4 years and held a master's degree. In addition, she maintained a California teaching credential. She had previously taught at an interfaith private college preparatory school whose mission emphasized social justice.

Teacher Elsie held a master's degree in teaching and maintained her state certification for teaching at the secondary level. She had taught for 2 decades in public schools and nearly a decade at David Ben-Gurion.

Teacher Gail had taught at David Ben-Gurion for over 5 years. She held a master's degree in teaching and maintained a multiple-subjects credential. She had experience as a teacher in public school before beginning at David Ben-Gurion.

Teacher Roberta held a bachelor's degree and completed a multiple subjects credential. In addition, she held a graduate-level certificate in leadership through teaching from a private Jewish college. She had taught at David Ben-Gurion for several years.

Teacher Sherry had taught at David Ben-Gurion for nearly a decade. She had a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in Jewish education. In addition, she held a graduate-level certificate in leadership through teaching from a private Jewish college and had completed supplemental training in diversity, racism, and prejudice.

Procedure

I collected the study data through individual interviews that served as the primary source of data and observations in response to the research questions; research took place over the fall and spring semesters. The head of school sent a letter via email to select parents with racially diverse children to support the research (Appendix A). The letter home was followed up with a personal phone call from the head of school and a day to meet me. Additionally, to support the research, the head of school held a faculty meeting in which all of the teachers were told that research on how students perceive effective teachers was being done at the school and that select teachers would be asked to interview with me. Teachers who had racially diverse students who were participating in the research were then invited for an interview. The teachers who accepted the invitation reviewed the consent waiver before the interview and had the opportunity to ask questions about the research project.

The semi-structured interviews were guided by a standardized set of protocols (Appendix B) and provided an understanding of students' perceptions about teacher practices, school culture, and what characteristics could be attributed to caring teachers. Each student was interviewed individually, and then group interviews were held with the study participants in groupings by grade level: third through fourth grade, fifth through sixth grade, and seventh through eighth grade. The individual student interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes, and the group interviews took approximately 75 minutes. The interviews took place in a classroom on school premises during a class period when the classroom was not in use. I also collected data through classroom and campus observations of the teacher-student interactions of the students participating in the study.

The classroom observations lasted approximately 60 minutes each and provided an opportunity to establish congruence between what students shared and their experiences of studenthood. Further, it provided a context for me to identify and understand the behaviors exhibited by students and teachers that could promote or hinder caring teacher-student relationships.

After I had collected all student data, I held individual teacher interviews using a standardized set of protocols (Appendix C). The teacher interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were based on the same set of interview questions as the student interview protocols but framed from a teaching perspective. I interviewed the teachers in a classroom during a period when no class was in session. The teacher interviews provided a deeper understanding of how teachers perceived the classroom as a caring environment and the activation of pedagogical practices that reinforced caring teacher-student relationships.

Data approach

Qualitative analytic approaches support the research process by establishing a mechanism for collecting and analyzing data. Though my experience as a researcher has been limited, my previous experience analyzing data related to Jewish cultural identity and reviewing prior research on student perspectives of schooling provided a foundation on which to design this research project. However, as someone who has been a consumer of research but has not had deep experience collecting qualitative research, I was reflective in my approach and deliberate in framing my approach to share similarities with previous research on teacher-student relationships that has been completed at private

and public schools. As a novice, I approached my research with a personal openness to learning from a reflective and iterative process.

Interview protocols

I tested the interview protocols to see if they would garner the desired data. In the process, I discovered that with my limited past experience conducting interviews, the data collection process was more challenging than I had expected. In a set of initial interviews with some grade school students—whose data I did not integrate into the research—I struggled with finding age-appropriate language and with how to make abstract ideas such as "caring" elicit responses that would effectively inform the conversation on teacher caring. These early trials provided much needed practice and insights into crafting the conversations to acquire the desired data and informed my technique for how to enter the student interviews.

In response to feeling that those initial interviews missed the mark, I found myself returning to the existing research that focused on attributes of teacher-student relationships and using the existing data to guide me in reframing the interview approach to uncover these themes. An example of the transition in my approach was to move away from an opening question such as, "Do you think teachers care about students?" Instead, I started by engaging students' curiosity about me and incorporating this by allowing them to ask me questions. Once it felt like they had become more comfortable and we had a "flow," I sought to have them conceptualize their own ideas about caring in a referential way by explaining how grandparents or parents show they care. This proved effective in reframing the interviews in that students were more specific in their

responses to questions and provided data that aligned with previous research.

Establishing trust

In any experience where the researcher is a stranger in the environment, it can take time to establish the trust of young informants. My close partnership with the administration helped me achieve a high level of trust by situating my presence on campus with parents, teachers, and students as a researcher who wanted to help private Jewish schools by learning what makes for good teaching. Students expressed a curiosity about my research and me personally. Many of them came to the meeting knowing quite a bit about my personal life including that I was a teacher at a Jewish college, that I was Jewish, that I had children who were Black, and that I wanted to know what they thought about their school. To build trusting relationships, before each interview I answered questions about myself and shared that my children were Ethiopian and Jewish and I wanted to know what their experiences would be like if they attended a private Jewish school.

My conversations with students suggested that they thought of me as a friendly adult they could share their school experiences with and not have to worry about repercussions. That I was seeking to make school better by listening to them may have provided students with a sense of trust that, in essence, we were allies in making schools and teachers better. My interest in their perspectives on schooling created a high level of receptivity. This receptivity was reflected in students' greetings and hallway conversations when they saw me on campus prior to or after interviews or during times that I was in the classroom. It was also reflected in their own interviews and willingness

to share personal stories about their experiences at David Ben-Gurion. The combination of having a partnership with the research location that primed students to be receptive to being interviewed, using existing research as the foundation for my investigation, and eventually developing an effective interview style gives me confidence that the data I collected were valid for the purposes of this research project.

In the early stages of my initial meetings with teachers, they were apprehensive and voiced some anxiety that their teaching practices would be critiqued. Some of the anxiety was relieved when I shared that I had been a teacher, that as an academic I was interested in developing research focused on "what works," and that the data would be driven by the students' perceptions. It was also helpful that the school administrative team shared their confidence in me as someone with a long track record as a professional in the Jewish community and the value of this research for the school and field of Jewish education. After I gathered preliminary data, I met with teachers at their request and shared themes that students perceived as examples of caring teacher-student relationships. This established affirmative relationships in which teachers saw their own practices reflected in the students' perceptions and, I believe, supported authentic responses in the teacher interviews.

The school administration also requested that I report on the preliminary findings to the school's board of trustees. The board had been supportive in providing approval to the administrative team for the research to go forward, serving as a key ally in helping families understand that the research, while a minor inconvenience for students and teachers, was part of the school's culture of improving its practices and practices in the field. At the presentation of the preliminary findings, many of the board members

exhibited genuine interest in taking the caring culture that existed and intentionally strengthening it by building on the research and translating it into effective classroom practices.

Coding and Categorizing the Data

Grounded theory provided a way to systematize the exploration of how racially diverse students perceived caring teachers. In order to establish clarity about what students described, I transcribed the completed student interviews, all of which I used in the data analysis. The interview responses were preliminarily line coded, and then I established initial codes. With these, I explored how they interacted within a particular student interview and across interviews. In reviewing the data, I began to find ambiguities in the codes; for example, "teacher flexibility" and "teacher openness" could have the same or different meanings. Also, I discovered that codes could have a circular reference; for example, "teacher flexibility" and "teacher strictness" could be perceived both as a teacher's maintaining high academic expectations and as the teacher's maintaining high academic expectations in only one particular use.

In seeking a resolution, I moved toward focused coding and recoded the data using the categorizations of academic, interpersonal, and fairness (Appendix D) established by Tosolt (2010). This proved to be useful because it revealed trends in the data that also aligned with established findings in qualitative research on student perceptions of effective teachers (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). However, I was not satisfied that applying Tosolt's (2010) categories wholesale was an effective response to qualitative research with an aim toward clarifying conceptions of

caring that were specifically affective in their nature and particular in their context. The process of developing focused coding identified themes that were present in the student and teacher interviews. I then categorized the student interviews by these common themes and examined them across the data using the theoretical framework to focus on those teacher practices that students considered most effective in establishing caring teacher-student relationships. I established consistency in the data by triangulating student and teacher interviews with my classroom observations. The themes I identified were consistent with the existing literature on student perceptions of caring teacher-student relationships. This consistency supported that my methodology could confirm teacher practices at this research location that resembled practices at schools where racially diverse students perceive teachers as exhibiting care.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Caring Teacher-Student Relationships

The data from this research provided an opportunity to understand caring teacher-student relationships in a majority White, private Jewish school from the perspectives of its racially diverse students. I prioritize the narratives of racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion Jewish Day School and to problematize institutional and societal narratives that promote meritocratic notions or more destructively seek to white out ethnic, racial and cultural identities. As Solórzano and Yosso (2002) suggested, "educational institutions operate in contradictory ways, with their potential to oppress and marginalize coexisting with their potential to emancipate and empower" (p. 26), and David Ben-Gurion was not immune to this contradictory expression of schooling. When school is contradictory to one's home experience, it can be an alienating environment. The level of alienation is higher for racially diverse students because the distance between what is culturally familiar and what is unfamiliar is often greater than what their White peers experience. As a result, racially diverse students are frequently left with a choice between their home and their school identities (Valenzuela, 1999). This challenge at David Ben-Gurion was visible in the school's student body, the majority of which was White and

from Ashkenazi families. The teachers of the academic courses were also White women, as was the executive director of the school. On the surface, it appeared to be a schooling environment where racially diverse students would forgo the cultural resources that affirm their cultural identities and, as a result, struggle to engage at school. So why did the racially diverse students in this study perceive David Ben-Gurion as a school where teachers cared about them? My argument is that teacher practices that affirmed students' perceptions of authentic care and students' sense of belonging at school were a foundation for forming and strengthening caring teacher-student relationships that served as resources for the racially diverse students.

In this chapter, I explore the different ways racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion identified caring teachers based on teaching practices. To provide an understanding of how racially diverse students experienced caring teacher-student relationships, I accepted diverse perspectives and focused on dominant perceptions of teacher caring that students held in common and that appeared regularly in the literature on school engagement. The students in this study identified how caring teacher-student relationships were constructed through a set of teacher behaviors such as sharing, listening, holding high expectations, and affirming students' cultures that were situated in the affective relationships between teachers and students. Racially diverse students perceived these teacher behaviors as promoting caring and belonging at school.

I begin by examining how racially diverse students understood *teacher sharing* as an affective behavior that forms a basis for caring teacher-student relationships. In establishing the connection between teacher sharing and caring, I used teachers' beliefs about their own practice of caring to confirm that their approach was purposeful and

checked the establishment of care that was perceived by racially diverse students against the desire to care that was articulated by their teachers. In the next section, I explore how *teacher listening* supported the construction of caring through a dialogic process. In order to understand to what degree these practices were purposeful, I sought out teacher perceptions on listening and related them to student understandings concerning the value of teacher listening in establishing care and belonging. Later in this section, I examine how racially diverse students perceived *teacher expectations* as an act of care and identified a connection between caring teacher-student relationships and academic motivation. Finally, I discuss the importance of *culturally responsive* teaching practices that were fundamental in affirming students' cultural identities and operated to reinforce a sense of belonging at school.

Teacher Sharing Shows You Care

One of the qualities that students at David Ben-Gurion identified in caring teacher-student relationships was teacher sharing. This finding is supported in previous research by Howard (2001), who suggested that students perceived teachers who shared about life outside of the classroom as caring and that students "contended that these episodes helped them to see their teacher as a human being who had emotions just like their own" (p. 138). Similar to Howard's findings, I found that racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion identified teacher sharing as an affective behavior that supported caring teacher-student relationships. These students identified sharing as taking place in affective relationships when teachers revealed their beliefs and values through personal stories. Students trusted teachers who shared and held a common conception of teachers

as like friends or as extensions of family.

There was also evidence that teachers who were perceived as caring by racially diverse students also knew their students and described intimate details of their family and cultural heritages and life cycle events as well as knowing their rabbis and their favorite activities outside of school. Teachers understood sharing as blurring the boundaries between the teacher as a friend and the teacher as a figure of authority. The data suggested that they held a common perception that sharing was a mechanism for establishing caring and that student behavior was affected by knowing the teacher as a person. Sharing appeared to activate reciprocity within the teacher-student relationship. Teachers at David Ben-Gurion perceived a connection between sharing and students' respect for the teacher that resulted in appropriate classroom behaviors such as following instructions and being less disruptive. Students and teachers understood sharing personal experiences as communicating values, beliefs, and emotions; teachers who held this understanding optimized activities such as morning circle or research assignments in ways that were culturally affirming and established a culturally caring classroom for racially diverse students by talking about racial and cultural differences. In this way, effective teachers actively sought opportunities to engage race and culture.

Rubén, a Latino sixth-grader who has attended David Ben-Gurion since kindergarten, confirmed that caring teacher-student relationships were built on behaviors including teacher sharing. He commented on how this sharing was important in establishing trust, which served as a precursor to care. When I asked, "Do you think that the caring teachers that you're thinking of right now, do you think they share about their personal lives?" Rubén responded,

Sometimes, but not to the extent where it would interrupt any normal school activities

EL: What kinds of things do they share?

Rubén: Well, one example is our language arts teacher this year. When telling us how to make a story more exciting, when writing it, she gave an example of a story when she was kid. She made it exciting and used that as an example in class.

EL: What was it like to learn a little about her experience as a kid?

Rubén: Well, it was nice and also, if you have a teacher that is okay sharing any information about past events, about their lives, you know they trust you as a student, as a fellow peer, as a friend in a way.

Rubén's comments inform the way racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion experienced caring in relational moments and how teacher sharing supported establishing authentic care. In his description, Rubén initially conceptualized the relational moment as one of aesthetic care, limited to teaching as academic instruction, and then reframed the moment as one of authentic care when he identified the teacher's sharing about past events from her childhood as a way of establishing a trusted relationship. The transition from aesthetic to authentic care was the result of the affective behavior of sharing personal stories, lived experiences, which have the potential to communicate religious and cultural beliefs between teachers and students. Rubén's statement made the relational nature of teacher-student caring visible by articulating how teachers' sharing about their lives served as a mechanism for establishing authentic care. Students and teachers held similar understandings and, in agreement with previous research, described moments of

authentic care using words that expressed trust and respect and equated the relationship to a friendship or as familial (Gay, 2019; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999).

Rubén's comments supported an understanding of care as relational and situated within the relationship between teachers and students. Racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion operationalized how caring teacher-student relationships were formed and suggested that they were reciprocal in nature. The students in this study suggested that teacher sharing was perceived as a form of trust and that it supported forming authentic caring and relationships that were familial in nature. Student descriptions of teachers as "like your friend" were an indicator of relationships that exemplified caring because they moved beyond the academic well-being of the students into caring for them as a person. Such indicators of authentic care have been linked to student perceptions of school being "like home" and suggested an environment that supports academic engagement for minority students (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2002). The student interviews confirmed that authentic care motivated academic engagement and supported racially diverse students' sense of belonging at school, a finding supported in the research on teacher-student relationships by Cornelius-White (2007), Faircloth and Hamm, (2004), and Roorda et al. (2011).

Racially diverse students in this research maintained, similar to Rubén, an understanding of care as relational and situated within the relationship between teachers and students. This emphasizes the power teachers hold in their ability to establish caring relationships or failure to do so and reinforces the value of teacher-student relationships in determining the educational outcomes of racially diverse students (Gay, 2010; Ladson-

Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). Students in this study confirmed that teachers whose pedagogy included sharing personally about their experiences in relation to a classroom activity supported students' academic performance. This finding aligns with existing research that has linked students' sense of belonging to school performance (Faircloth, 2009). Students who identified teacher sharing as an academic resource described teachers in ways that included personal exchanges such as giving gifts and attending students' extracurricular programs as well as knowing about their teachers' lives. The sense of belonging was exemplified in teacher-student interactions. These supported students' perceptions that teacher sharing was a form of caring that was expressed in terms of relatedness or belonging. Raquel, a Latina third grader, commented on the way that caring and sharing established relatedness and identified how it supported her academic engagement:

> A caring teacher takes you into account. If your parents are divorced and your dad isn't the best at writing a report, your teacher gives you more time and help with reports. A caring teacher helps you. It is interesting when you hear about them [teachers]. It helps us learn in class when they talk about them and their family… . It helps us learn and relate. It helps to know about their personal stuff. Like we know that our teacher's dog died and stuff.

Raquel's comments represent the way students in this study understood the connection between authentic care that was fostered by teacher sharing and their own sense of belonging at school. Students at David Ben-Gurion and in previous research described belonging as derived from relationships with teachers that supported the students' feeling cared for or accounted for at school (Garza & Soto Huerta, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Schussler & Collins, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999).

Raquel's comment that "it helps to know about their personal stuff" supported a common understanding of caring teacher-student relationships as constructed in personal

relations and as promoting academic engagement. Further, Raquel identified her own need to belong when she stated, “A caring teacher takes you into account.” Such a statement echoes a common student perception that at David Ben-Gurion forms of being “accounted for” and “held accountable” even when students identified the teacher’s behavior as strict affirmed authentic care. In Raquel’s description of how sharing and caring are connected to academic success, she identified the teacher’s expectations and affective behavior, standing in for a family member and providing academic support, as forms of care. This was evident in her statement that “When your parents are divorced and your dad isn’t the best at writing a report, your teacher gives you more time and help with reports. A caring teacher helps you.” Raquel’s comments indicated how belonging supported her academic aspirations; what was less visible in Raquel’s response was a deeper need for connecting with adults who might provide caring that was absent at home. What would have been evident to anyone in the room was that she felt deep value in being “in the know” about her teacher’s life and also in “being known” by the teacher. In a hallway conversation that Raquel and I had going from the interview room to her classroom, she disclosed information about her relationship with her parents and how it shaped her need for belonging at school. She explained that she was “lucky” to be able to talk to her teacher about life. She described how when they were not in class, the teacher shared advice that she would “give to her own kids.” The narratives of racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion provided evidence, similar to previous research, that teacher-student relationships promote academic engagement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Roorda et al., 2011).

My results from the present study confirmed that racially diverse students used

moments of teacher sharing as a mechanism to form caring teacher-student relationships. Students' affective interactions with teachers affirmed their sense of belonging at school and the inclusion of home identities as part of their experience at school. In my interview with Octavio, a Latino fifth-grader who has attended the school since kindergarten, I asked him, "So what do one of those teachers do that makes you think like, 'Wow, I really love this teacher?'" His response provided an understanding of how caring teacher-student relationships were conceptualized by students as a sense of belonging at school:

> Well, they're all really nice even though one of them is strict. They're caring. They are always there if you need them and stuff like that. You can tell them anything. They have a good sense of humor. It's just, what's the word … they make me feel at home. They make me feel like I belong here.

Octavio's comments articulate the way students conceptualized caring teacher-student relationships as a resource that supported their sense of belonging at school. He perceived the teacher as trusted and described caring teachers as "there if you need them" or "you can tell them anything." This description of caring teachers was common among students in this study, as exemplified by the attributes of care—trust, friendship, academic support—that Raquel and Rubén previously identified as integral in the development of authentic care and belonging. Further, Octavio suggested that teacher strictness does not exclude teachers from being perceived as caring and nor does it diminish his sense of belonging at school. The data provided evidence that students perceived teachers as affirming their cultural identities. For Octavio, this was identified in the connection that caring teachers helped him "feel at home." The notion that one feels at home, which research has suggested affirms students' home identities in the classroom, was identified by students in this study as an indicator of teachers who effectively supported the schooling experiences of racially diverse students (Howard, 2011; Ladson-

Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). The sense of belonging at school that Octavio shared advanced the construction of David Ben-Gurion as culturally affirming in a way that mediated binary cultural frames models (Ogbu, 2003), specifically that would perpetuate the need to "act white" in order for Octavio and other racially diverse students to experience success as students.

That students perceived a sense of belonging at school confirmed one of the ways caring teacher-student relationships operated to establish trust that, in turn, supported racially diverse students' religious and cultural identities at school. Further, the interview data suggested that racially diverse students were academically motivated by teachers they perceived as caring. This finding emphasizes the connection between caring-teacher student relationships, students' sense of belonging, and academic achievement and is consistent with Faircloth's (2009) findings that belonging is foundational and not supplemental in its ability to promote academic engagement.

Octavio, Raquel, and Rubén identified ways in which caring teacher-student relationships become academic resources. In another example of a student's conceptualizing caring as an academic resource, Eli, a Chinese eighth-grader who has attended the school since sixth grade, described the academic advantage that caring teacher-student relationships provided:

> [If you] make a few mistakes they [teachers] will help you with that. They will help you get good grades. They don't just fail you. [They are] similar to parents, just more academic… . They call on you and give you a chance to express your opinion. They want you to be part of [the] group and not just a quiet one. They want to hear my opinion. No one feels left out.

Eli's comments foster an understanding of how care served as a resource in the classroom by identifying different ways in which he perceived caring teacher behaviors. He suggested that caring teachers help students navigate mistakes and "get good grades."

This was similar to Raquel's conception that teachers filled in for familial support when it was not available and provided more academic flexibility and help to ensure student success. Eli also identified a level of teacher flexibility in his statement that "they don't just fail you." In the interviews, the students shared a common belief that a difference between caring teachers and those who do not care was that caring teachers were more flexible with assignments and focused on academic as opposed to punishing or failing a student. This description of caring teachers is supported by previous research findings that caring teachers were warm demanders who sought excellence through their behaviors and shared responsibility with racially diverse students (Gay, 2010). Eli provided an example of caring teacher-student relationships that supported academic achievement through teacher behaviors that resembled what students experienced at home when he described his teachers as "similar to parents, just more academic."

The students in this study stressed the importance of teacher behaviors that supported racially diverse students' sense of belonging in the classroom. Eli identified these behaviors as being called on in class, having a chance to express your opinion, and being part of a group. That Eli placed an emphasis on being heard, a form of being accounted for, supports my conceptualization for this study of caring as a resource for academic engagement. Eli's comments operationalized how caring teacher-student relationships created a sense of belonging. While there was a distinction between home and school, his comments linked caring teacher-student relationships to home by drawing the relationship as "similar to parents" and to achievement by suggesting that teachers "help you get good grades." He also connected teacher practices to establishing a sense of student belonging by suggesting, "no one feels left out." At David Ben-Gurion, there was

evidence that authentic care fostered caring teacher-student relationships that supported a sense of belonging. When racially diverse students perceived being cared for, it had a positive effect on their academic engagement.

Contradictory data: Teacher sharing could be perceived as aesthetic care

The overarching belief of racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion was that teacher sharing supported caring teacher-student relationships. However, some data did not support the presence of teacher sharing as a form of authentic care; one student identified teacher sharing in ways that were limited to aesthetic care. In the descriptions of aesthetic caring it was regularly talked about in relation to student perceptions of teacher fairness. A prominent example appeared in my interview with Lew, a Chinese third-grader who identified care in his teachers' responses to his own disruptive classroom behavior. He compared the difference in how he was disciplined between his previous experience at a local public school and what he experienced at David Ben-Gurion:

> [At my previous school] They just all like, they just give you a blue slip and think that you've learned your lesson. But you didn't…. [Here] I don't get a blue slip. Well, the, like I said, the teachers tell you, "you shouldn't do that" and the other one, they just don't care. In this school, they just tell you what's good and what's bad.

Lew revealed that some students might not experience teacher sharing and as a result may not perceive it as a form of authentic care. Instead, as Lew identified, a student who does not perceive authentic care is likely to be limited to ranges of aesthetic care that are located in the students' sense of fairness instead of affective behaviors that support a broader sense of belonging. In this teacher-student relationship, the level of trust remains

low because care is reduced to a transactional relation centered on being "good" or "bad" rather than on the liberating experience of being cared for that takes place when authentic care is present. While related data were limited in this study, Lew's responses served as evidence that for some students at David Ben-Gurion, teacher sharing fell short and that a broader range of teacher practices was needed to establish authentic care.

Teacher Sharing as a Practice of Student Engagement

At David Ben-Gurion, teachers were keenly aware of the importance of affective interactions and that teacher sharing was a mechanism for developing caring teacher-student relationships. Teacher and student narratives indicated that teachers sought opportunities to share personally of themselves and established pedagogical practices such as classroom meetings to integrate sharing into their curricula. Teachers established culturally responsive caring through classroom structures that supported safe spaces for students as well as teachers to engage in sharing. These informal instructional moments supported the classroom benefit of caring teacher-student relationships by reinforcing the reciprocal nature of caring. Howard (2002) suggested that regular classroom activities such as morning meetings are effective ways to make school more familial and to build community. While Howard did not address teacher sharing directly, teachers at David Ben-Gurion perceived sharing as the natural outcome of teaching practices that invited sharing such as morning meetings. At David Ben-Gurion, teachers who shared were aware that sharing established caring teacher-student relationships and went out of their way to share their personal experiences as framing for assignments or to include their personal stories in activities such as classroom meetings.

The interview data confirmed that teachers in this study were purposeful in operationalizing sharing as a way to show that they cared about students; sharing was part of maintaining affective relationships with students that made visible a range of emotions and supported students' understanding of teachers as human beings. Teachers understood that sharing supported the construction of caring relationships between teachers and students, and these relationships resembled Gay's (2010) conception of culturally responsive caring in establishing classrooms in which students felt they belonged and were personally known and supported in fulfilling high academic expectations. The teacher interviews confirmed that sharing was purposeful and supported reciprocal relationships that provided a way for students to be cared for and to be carers. For example, teacher Roberta described how she used sharing to form a "deeper connection" with students:

> I share with them my news. If I have exciting news that I obviously feel it is okay to tell my class, [I] go for it. And it gets them excited and makes them feel a deeper connection with me, which then of course fosters comfort, where they take chances academically and it goes from there.

Roberta articulated her belief that teacher sharing supported the construction of care in the teacher-student relationship. She shared a belief held by effective teachers of racially diverse students in this study that affective behaviors were important in establishing caring relations between teachers and students. Further, Roberta identified how sharing was operationalized as care through affective relationships that formed a "deeper connection." That affective relationships promoted academic outcomes was a common understanding of teachers in this study as well as in previous research (Gay, 2010; Noddings, 2005; Roorda et al., 2011; Tosolt, 2010). Roberta's comments provided insight into how teachers operationalized sharing to establish authentic care. She

described a chain of events that initially began with teacher sharing, which she perceived strengthened the bond between teacher and student and then described how this bond was instrumental in constructing a classroom experience where students' belonging was linked to promoting academic engagement; specifically, she identified in students a willingness to take academic chances.

While teacher sharing can be described in different ways, in this study, teachers and students identified teacher sharing as forms of "openness" or "knowing" that supported students' perceptions of teachers as authentic carers. For example, teacher Sherry explained how she was open to sharing personal stories and responding to students' questions with personal answers that were understood as a form of authentic care:

> I am very open with my students about, I tell them stories from when I was their age, you know. I tell them what I did over the weekend. I share with them, they ask me questions, anything, as long as it is appropriate.

The data from interviews suggested that teachers understood sharing as an affective behavior that supported a deeper connection between teachers and students and fostered authentic care. When racially diverse students in this study perceived teacher sharing, they described it with words that supported the construction of relationships built on trust and friendship.

The racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion commonly described teacher sharing as integral to establishing caring teacher-student relationships. These relationships fostered a sense of school as welcoming and shielded racially diverse students from some of the structural contradictions of schooling that could be alienating. Of course, building trust was more complex than a single act or moment of sharing. The ability to establish caring teacher-student relationships was a result of the accumulation

of many encounters of sharing, which was why teacher practices that provided regular opportunities were valuable. Teacher Sherry's realization that a "deeper connection" with the teacher reframed the teacher-student relationship was powerful because it prioritized the need of students to feel cared for at school:

> I really want to know what they're sharing and that comes across, and I feel it comes across in things that I've observed like my classroom management. I have a much easier time than some other teachers with the middle school students and I think [it is] because they know I care about them.

Teaching practices that operationalized authentic care provided deeper ways for students to know their teachers and for teachers to know their students. Gay (2010) suggested that such behaviors can be understood as culturally responsive caring when teachers are "providing spaces and relationships where ethnically diverse students feel recognized, respected, valued, seen and heard" (p. 51). The benefit of caring teacher-student relationships was that students were more focused in their work and teachers had an easier time with classroom management.

It was not accidental that the teachers at David Ben-Gurion identified caring through classroom practices of teacher sharing such as morning circle that emphasized the interaction of relational practices. Gay (2010) emphasized that "caring as an approach to teaching is more action-driven than emotionally centered" (p. 53). At David Ben-Gurion, teachers' classroom practices strengthened teacher-student relationships. In my interview with teacher Roberta, I opened by asking her, "If you think about your classroom and the way you practice in your classroom, what are the ways in which you perceive yourself as being a caring teacher?" Roberta described how she felt that teacher sharing constructed the classroom in ways that were similar to a family and that reciprocity included a level of equality between the students and the teacher. She clarified

that her construction of equality supported students knowing her as “human” and that she had a “caring nature”:

> Because we are a smaller class size, I think it becomes part of the day where it's like the equivalent of the family coming to the dinner table every night and you kind of discuss the day. Whereas we come to the rug every morning and we discuss last night's events and the news from home anybody wants to share. And each child can share something from home once a week so they bring in something. And it just really facilitates a really warm feeling amongst everyone. And I'm also a part of it so I share news from home from myself… . I think that it gives us a time to look at each other as equals, even myself, and they still respect me as their teacher but they also see that I'm human, and I think that in itself shows a different side of like a caring nature from me.

Roberta identified one of the core characteristics, the classroom perceived as home-like, that racially diverse students in this study and in previous research identified as supporting academic engagement (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). Her desire to have class constructed to be perceived by students as home-like was important because it provided students with evidence that she cared about them as individuals as well as about their academic success. Roberta identified in her own pedagogy a set of teacher practices that made school more like home; she explained that morning circle functioned “like the equivalent of the family coming to the dinner table.” Roberta’s statement that teacher sharing “just creates a warm feeling amongst everyone” indicated her desire to use sharing as a mechanism for establishing affective relationships and even further to make it integral in the classroom culture. She operationalized the affective relationship by placing value in the relational aspects of care, which she identified as degrees of equality between the students and the teacher.

Roberta’s construction of reciprocity echoed that of many of the racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion, as was evident in earlier comments by students who indicated the importance of teachers as a support mechanism for academic engagement as

well as feeling cared for by teachers. Both students and teachers acknowledged the power dynamic in their relationships. Where caring was evident, students in these caring relationships did not dismiss the teachers' authority; instead, authentic care supported appropriate classroom behavior. Teachers reported that forms of authentic care supported students' respect for teachers and ultimately their academic outcomes. The promotional effect of caring teacher-student relationships on student engagement at David Ben-Gurion was aligned with the large meta-analyses by Cornelius-White (2007) and Roorda et al. (2011) that confirmed the promotion of student engagement that was behaviorally associated with a deeper sense of belonging, increased self-efficacy, and fewer disruptive behaviors. That the findings at David Ben-Gurion reflected the meta-analyses affirmed that there is a broad benefit for racially diverse students in caring teacher-student relationships.

Contradictory data: Teacher sharing lacked culturally responsive stories

The teachers in this research study identified sharing personal stories as a mechanism for establishing forms of authentic care. While the teachers and racially diverse students identified the academic curricula as culturally responsive and described how Chinese, Black, Latinx, and Jewish cultures were operationalized as part of the curricula, the data revealed a contradictory expression of schooling in the absence of Chinese and Latinx cultural narratives in the ways teachers shared.

Specifically, the data revealed that teachers shared personal stories that were absent of Chinese or Latinx cultural knowledge; when cultural knowledge was

transmitted, it was constructed through Jewish religious, linguistic, and cultural stories. For example, teacher Roberta described how she shared with her science class her experience at the Jewish day school she attended as a child. She explained that her biology unit on dissection required that the students dissect a pig. She explained that the school decided against dissecting the pig, even if it was only symbolically inappropriate because it was not kosher: "We're not going to do the pig. It's a Jewish school!" In another example of Jewish culture made relevant through teacher sharing, teacher Caryn used her husband, who is Israeli, to establish a cultural connection between the students and Israel through language and peoplehood. When students struggled with Hebrew words on assignments, she explained that as a classroom activity "every now and then, we will ask him what a [Hebrew] word means because we will send him a text." In addition to stories of teacher sharing that appeared in the data, Jewish culture was prominent in the religious and cultural structure of the school in a manner that Chinese and Latinx cultures were not. Students maintained a cultural currency of commonly held Jewish religious and cultural practices including celebrating holidays and life cycle events with their teachers that affirmed their Jewish identities.

The data appeared to confirm that the religious and culturally congruent narratives affirmed racially diverse students' experience of care and belonging despite the absence of teacher stories that were culturally relevant to their Chinese and Latinx cultural heritages. While it was possible that racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion benefited from the intersectional and particularistic cultural experience of Jewish caring, it was unclear from the data what if any negative impacts the absence of Chinese and Latinx culture narratives in teacher sharing may have had on constructing caring teacher-

student relationships and promoting academic engagement. Racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion appeared to benefit from the intersectional and particularistic cultural experience of Jewish caring.

Teacher Listening as an Academic Resource

Teachers and students in this research study suggested that teacher listening supported constructing caring teacher-student relationships that fostered student engagement. Research by Faircloth (2009) confirmed that students who perceive that the teacher "cares about what I say" or that when teachers expressed care by listening, students were more likely to feel connected to their teachers and feel a deepened sense of belonging at school. Garza and Soto Huerta (2014) argued that teacher listening was connected to developing effective frameworks of care for Latinx youth when it validated students' sense of self-worth. For example, listening that invited classroom dialogue that validated students' understandings supported the conception of listening as an affective behavior that students perceived as authentic care. Racially diverse students in this study held a common belief that teacher listening was integral to knowing that a teacher cared about them. Teacher listening was also a mechanism for including students' cultural heritages in the classroom by supporting their coauthorship of the classroom as a dialogic space. Freire (2016) suggested that teacher-student relationships that were mutually constructed were an opportunity for students to be coauthors in their education. When a teacher reinforced the ideas of racially diverse students by listening, she was also establishing a culturally responsive classroom that validated the students' cultural frames of reference (Gay, 2010). Teachers should not be construed as passive in establishing the

opportunity for students to coauthor their school experiences. Freire (2016) argued that teacher listening, in its establishing students as coauthors, has the potential to activate a liberatory experience for racially diverse students because "the students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (p. 81). Racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion understood listening as a form of authentic care that they described as validating their self-worth or establishing a sense of belonging. Eli described how teacher listening supported his experience of schooling: "I think about how teachers listen to you. They'll listen kind of like a counselor. They'll take your suggestions [about schoolwork] into consideration."

Students in this research, like Eli, understood teacher listening as a form of academic support and respect. They identified different forms of being listened to as a teacher's openness and academic flexibility and in their abilities to express opinions to the teacher. Students described being listened to as a form of caring because the dialogue operated to affirm the affective relationships between teachers and students. For example, Eli commented,

> They [teachers] call on you and give you a chance to express your opinion. They want you to be part of [the] group and not just a quiet one. They want to hear my opinion. No one feels left out.

Eli conceived being listened to as his teacher's desire to hear his opinion. Teacher listening was described as caring because students understood that it supported a student-centered approach that constructed the student as relevant within the pedagogy. Gay (2010) suggested, "Caring teachers also place students at the center of the learning orbit and turn their [students'] interests and strengths into opportunities for academic success" (p. 50). Caring teachers used student-centered practices that called on students' knowledge to be part of academic problem solving. Such relational pedagogies, Freire

(2016) suggested, support education as "the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination" because the teacher-student relationship supports learning as an ongoing process of transformation and care.

Racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion benefited from teacher listening in teachers' establishing caring teacher-student relationships. I asked teacher Caryn, "So when I say 'caring' and particularly teacher caring in the classroom, what comes to mind as the behaviors that you think about as sort of caring behaviors and what happens in that space?" She shared her belief that students understood teachers listening to students as a form of caring:

> I think of it [caring] as really hearing the students, like listening to them and treating them as individuals, getting to know each one of them and what motivates them and knowing not just what motivates them but what they're interested in and what's holding them back and things like that. So, I think it's really the individual attention. And we are very lucky here that none of my classes are over ten students. So it allows me to feel like I really get to know them and have some personal conversations, not about me but about them. And to me that's really what caring is and what differentiates us from a bigger school where the teachers just don't always have the time to do that with the students.

Caryn identified what many teachers expressed, that teacher listening was an affective behavior that fostered care, which was described in terms of respect and student motivation. The connection Caryn made between listening and knowing students as individuals is supported by literature findings that suggest that when racially diverse students felt "known" or when a teacher took personal interest in the student, it was considered a form of culturally responsive care and supported academic engagement (Garza & Soto Huerta, 2014; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Schussler & Collins, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999).

When teachers at David Ben-Gurion listened in a way that was perceived as

individualized, diverse students, who were critical consumers of pedagogy, paid attention to how the teacher was making herself available as a classroom resource. Alejandra, a Latina fifth-grader, explained how care was connected to teacher listening and academic expectations. I asked her, "If you think about teachers who are really caring, what types of behaviors do they have in the classroom?" She responded,

> They'll [teachers] listen, definitely and they'll watch you and they'll make sure that you're okay and what you're doing is good [academic work]… I'd really want to impress them to make sure that they, yeah…But I think I would do better school work for the person who cared because I wouldn't want to let them down and I'd really want them to know that them being nice is helping me in school.

Alejandra's response revealed the complexity of caring teacher-student relationships and that care is not easily deconstructed. In her comments, she initially identified care as listening. However, Alejandra expanded her initial perception and described teacher listening as an affective behavior that included knowing the student and ensuring that the student was okay and was academically supported by the teacher. Latinx students in the research completed by Huerta and Garza (2014) similarly identified teachers as caring when they listened to students, made them comfortable, and provided academic scaffolding.

Racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion valued teacher listening and felt that it demonstrated care. The data provided evidence that teacher listening was connected to other affective behaviors that were described as part of caring teacher-student relationships. For example, when Alejandra stated that the teacher will "make sure you're okay" or that she would work harder at school to "let them know being nice is helping me," she articulated a common belief that caring teacher-student relationships promoted belonging and academic engagement at David Ben-Gurion. Further, being

cared for established a sense of student autonomy and personal responsibility that was connected to academic effort and was described as a desire not to disappoint caring teachers. Teacher listening was identified in encounters when the student felt listened to as part of a process of seeking help. The positive recurrence of these interactions likely supported the reciprocal nature of caring teacher-student relationships and suggested that the repetition of being listened to strengthens caring relationships.

In practice, these dialogic interactions, when I witnessed them, were awkward and tended to look like short outbursts of conversation on a specific topic that frequently disrupted the teacher's existing lecture. It was the type of disruption that could challenge the patience of a teacher and that might be impossible to accommodate if the classroom size was not limited to 12 or fewer students, as was the case at David Ben-Gurion. In teacher Gail's class, it was common for her to finish what she was saying, and if the response was not relevant to the entire class to walk to the desk of the student and ask him or her to restate the question. I witnessed her kneel beside or lean over the student with hands or elbows on the student's desk or have a hand gently placed on the student's arm or back. Many of the teachers at David Ben-Gurion responded to the individual academic needs of students by working side by side at students' desks and sharing personal space with them. The low number of students per classroom and teaching practices that welcomed students' spontaneous verbalization, as long as it was academic in nature, supported flexible classrooms in which there was significant individualized academic attention. In classroom instances where the conversation was not academic in nature, teachers verbally redirected students to the assignment. In an extreme case when the disruption was not academic, the teacher provided a warning and eventually requested

that Lew go for a drink of water to take a break from class. He did this as if it were routine and returned shortly after to resume his classwork.

Racially diverse students regularly called on teachers as personal academic resources. This was reflected in the interviews and was visible during my observations when teachers were helping one student and would be called on by another. In these instances, the teacher navigated from desk to desk and responded to the students' individualized needs. For example, teacher Sherry came alive as she greeted each student and was animated in her one-to-one student interactions. I noted that she increased the volume of her voice to punctuate a student's correct answer or decreased the volume and took on a sympathetic tone to diminish the sting of an incorrect answer. Managing the individual needs of the students established a way for Sherry to express care as a classroom resource.

Contradictory data: Latinas perceived teacher listening as a prominent classroom resource

Racially diverse students and their teachers identified teacher listening as an important attribute in establishing caring teacher-student relationships. Teacher listening was commonly described in teacher-student interactions when the student was seeking academic support. There was some evidence that teacher listening was a more prominent resource for Latina students in the construction of authentic care in their teacher-student relationships.

Unlike their Chinese and Latino classmates, Latina students at David Ben-Gurion perceived teacher listening in moments of seeking personal as well academic support

from their teachers. Latinas appeared to maximize the benefit of authentic care through the reciprocal nature of personal relationships with teachers. For example, Alejandra described how she used her personal relationship to strengthen the bond between herself and the teacher, "She [teacher] really cares about me and we talk a lot. Like with her, I will tell her about my personal life, she'll tell me about her personal life and it's a really strong bond between me and her." In another example, Lenore suggested that her personal relationship with teachers supported the construction of her Mexican cultural heritage at school: "I like to talk about my culture with my teachers. I am really proud to be Mexican." A difference between what Latina students perceived and their classmates was situated in a willingness to seek help from teachers in ways that were about their personal lives and not limited to academic help seeking. Latina students' comments seemed to suggest that they maintained a higher level of interpersonal relations with their teachers.

The prominence of interpersonal caring specifically toward Latina students by their teachers was not reinforced by data in the teacher interviews. However, the strength of caring teacher-student relationships was generally visible in the level of detail and personal knowledge that teachers articulated about Chinese and Latinx students as well as their White classmates. Teachers described knowing students on a personal level and were able to operationalize it as a way of checking in on their well-being. For example, teacher Sherry explained how she checked in on a Latina student whose mom had breast cancer: "I ask how she's doing, how her parents are doing, seeing that she's going over to friends' houses and just checking in with her." Teacher Elsie described how a male student's "behavior seemed to be very extreme," and this was an opportunity for her to

ask, “What’s going on?” and to find out that the behaviors were the result of an argument with his dad and provide support. While the data from the teacher interviews did not specifically confirm that teachers favored Latina students, these students appeared more receptive to care in the reciprocal interactions between teachers and students. That Latina students perceived authentic caring in their teacher-student interactions demonstrated that culturally responsive care was an available classroom resource for their experience of schooling at David Ben-Gurion.

Teacher Expectations Matter

Holding high academic expectations of racially diverse students, particularly in responding to students’ academic needs, supports the construction of caring teacher-student relationships. Research has found that racially diverse students perceived teacher expectations, the act of wanting students to succeed, as a form of care (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Further, as Ladson-Billings (2009) suggested, teachers’ holding high expectations of racially diverse students can be a practice of culturally responsive teaching when it provides the necessary academic scaffolding or flexibility to ensure that students “participate fully and meaningfully in the construction of knowledge” rather than “assimilationist teaching [which] assumes that students come to class with certain skills and suggests that it is impossible to teach those who are not at a certain skill level” (p. 104). Teachers who hold high academic expectations and support individualized learning, which students often described as flexibility and personal help on assignments, are less likely to construct racially diverse students using narratives that portray them as “deficient” or “not worth the time” and offer an alternative that reinforces

care in the teacher-student relationship (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999).

At David Ben-Gurion, teachers of racially diverse students held high academic expectations and individualized their curricula. The students in turn described teachers as warm demanders in their exhibiting disappointment and understanding rather than frustration or punishment with students who under achieved. Teachers frequently worked side by side with racially diverse student to help them navigate mutually acceptable solutions in the form of additional work or in recognizing that family needs might require extended time to complete the work. Teachers valued independent learning outcomes as a form of fairness, and rather than seeking a blanket form of equality, they exhibited care by teaching to students' individual needs.

It is important to critique these teacher practices through a race-conscious lens because teacher expectations of excellence have historically been lower for racially diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela 1999). That teachers at David Ben-Gurion responded to individual needs could raise a concern that teachers have lower expectations for racially diverse students and make exceptions as a way of fulfilling their own perceptions of how diverse students behave in class (Ladson-Billings, 2009). A teacher's attitude towards students, as Ladson-Billings (2009) suggested, "not only tells them what she believes about them but also tells all the other students in the class what they should believe about them" (p. 25). While student perceptions about teacher expectations cannot determine if teachers at David Ben-Gurion held deficit narratives, students perceived teachers as having high expectations of their students. In the group interview with the fifth- and sixth-grade students in this study, the students shared how

teacher expectations were a sign of caring. To understand if the teacher expectations mattered to the students, I asked, "Do you think your class follows her example?" Octavio explained the nuanced balance between being "strict" and being "nice" that caring teachers maintained:

> She is strict. And she is really nice still. Like, she cares about us so much. Like, when she scolds us, though, she always has a reason for it. Like, she'll give us an example… So she is like teaching us how to succeed in life.

That teachers' expectations mattered even when the teacher was strict or scolded suggested that racially diverse students held complex understandings of teachers' affective responses and that emotion could be indicative of a caring relationship. As Octavio suggested, a teacher may scold a student and still maintain a caring teacher-student relationship. His comments emphasized the importance of teachers' holding authentic relationships in which caring can be coconstructed through mutual understandings with students. To Octavio, being scolded was a sign of caring because it reinforced his conception of the teacher's responsibility to teach him "how to succeed in life." This example echoes previous research that found that teacher "hollering" could be a form of culturally responsive caring (Howard, 2002). Howard (2002) also suggested that teacher-student interactions such as these reveal students' "ability to interpret their teacher's behavior accurately and to recognize the teacher's desire for wanting the students to perform well academically and behaviorally" (p. 437).

When I interviewed Alejandra, I asked about the connection between strictness and teacher caring. Her response identified teachers' expectations as an academic support:

> In some ways, possibly. I wouldn't know because I don't ask them if they care, but I think that sometimes if they're being strict, then maybe it's just

> to help me more. Yeah, because it will make me think better because if they're being strict then I have to work harder so that they don't get mad or angry.

Alejandra understood that teacher caring was not always a matter of what teachers say: "I don't ask them if they care." She identified that caring was an interpretation of a complex set of behaviors within the teacher-student relationship. When Alejandra conceptualized strictness, she positioned the teacher as resource for her academic achievement; she suggested that strictness motivated her to "work harder" in order to meet the expectations of the teacher and not make her "mad or angry." In this interaction, Alejandra identified the promotional aspects of caring teacher-student relationships. She provided a powerful example of how these relationships mutually reinforce caring. It is easy to imagine that without caring, the teacher-student relationship would fail to serve as an academic resource and that it would lose its promotional qualities. Under such circumstances, Alejandra would not have maintained a desire to work harder to avoid disappointing her teacher. Further, students would perceive the absence of authentic caring as an aesthetic relationship. Valenzuela (1999) conceptualized such relationships as aesthetic and claimed that they supported a perception of racially diverse students and their cultures as a form of deficit schooling. She also suggested that deficit schooling elicits student resistance to school that needs to be understood by educators as a form of academic protest rather than not caring about school. Valenzuela suggested that caring is relational and that it serves as the foundation for racially diverse students' academic success:

> Whereas teachers demand caring about school in the absence of relation, students view caring, or reciprocal relations, as the basis for all learning. Their precondition to caring about school is that they be engaged in a

caring relationship with an adult at school. (p. 79)

In response to academic protest, the mutual positive reinforcement that catalyzes the promotional effect of caring teacher-student relationships would be replaced by teacher perceptions of the student as resistant or "not worth the time."

Rubén, similar to Alejandra, understood teacher expectations as contextual and important in the way teachers at David Ben-Gurion supported academic engagement. In our conversation, Rubén shared,

> I like the fact that they focus on everyone and they're caring and they know to a good extent about our personal life and what we do… Strictness can be a form of caring depends on how you do it because in a way, you don't want to give the freedom to do things that could come back and harm the student. So to be too strict and to a certain extent, putting too much regulations is not a really likable reputation for many teachers. It is sometimes a form of caring when you have agreed with students that it needs, might need, the teacher might need to be a little stricter because it might help the students a little bit more but to a good extent, it is. It's a good quality for a caring teacher.

At David Ben-Gurion, racially diverse students understood strictness as a form of academic accountability and believed teachers who held students academically accountable to be caring. In this study, these students described caring teacher-student relationships as reflected when the teacher was strict "to help me more" and maintained a balance between being strict and nice. Effective teachers balanced strictness and niceness in maintaining academic accountability and flexibility in response to the needs of students. In my interview with teacher Roberta, she exemplified how effective teachers balance between being in "teacher mode" (setting classroom expectations) and being understood as a "friend figure" (a guiding adult):

> I think there is a fine balance between the in teacher mode and then coming back down and them seeing you as a friend figure because it builds their confidence to know that you care about them and [that you] don't only care that they do well in academics.

In another example, teacher Caryn expressed the need to hold high expectations for a Latino student who was struggling. She explained that she chose to meet with him and emphasized her role as a warm demander by seeking the support of his mother to ensure that he maintained the needed academic rigor at school and home. In addition to this meeting, she provided additional academic support in one-on-one study sessions outside of class time:

> I met with a student this morning and his mother. I don't think he's doing as well in math as he could. He's got a B and he just had a really disastrous test. His grade was going to be fine, but I think it was out of caring that I don't want to see him decline.

In another example, teacher Sherry identified how knowing her students supported her construction of caring teacher-student relationship by allowing her to respond to individual student needs and to ensure that diverse students are held to rigorous academic standards. For example, she shared about a Latina student,

> [She] doesn't have internet access at home and so making sure she has the materials when she's here, that she can take them home with her or that she email it to me at the end of the day [from school] and then I print it for her, or she says she's using this resource online, I'll print out a few pages so she can continue doing her research at home.

Teachers and students shared a common perception that caring teachers were demanding and empathetic in their teaching practices. Students identified teachers who were warm demanders as caring about students' academic engagement and students' well-being. At David Ben-Gurion, students internalized caring teacher-student relationships as establishing a sense of belonging and beyond merely academic help, fostered their growth as people.

Contradictory data: Fun and joking support the construction of caring teacher-student relationships

The racially diverse students in this research maintained a strong belief that teachers' expectations were an indicator of caring teacher-student relationships and supported academic engagement. While students identified the importance of teachers who held them accountable as forms of caring, there were some responses, although few, that identified academic fun and teacher joking as having supported the construction of caring teacher-student relationships.

The students in this study described academic fun and joking in terms that emphasized it as relieving the pressure of being students at David-Ben-Gurion. It was a commonly held belief that school was academically rigorous and students experienced that challenge as pressure. Lew described how the expectation to do well at school was "like an elephant of pressure on your head," and Lenore shared that "I hate it when teachers put so much pressure on us." Activities that students described as fun or teacher joking provided relief from that pressure. Rita described that technology and the Internet, particularly to look up the answers to difficult math questions, were novel and provided a fun way to do math: "We play some games on the Smart Board like… I like playing Go Math, it's a math game." Juan shared how joking could further establish the affective relationship between teachers and students: "On a test, she'll ask me to 'Come over here.' I'll come over to her desk. She'd be like, 'You did terrible.' And, I'd be like, 'Really?' She'd be like, 'No, you did great.'" Juan later confirmed that this type of joking with his teacher supported his trust and closeness with her. Students connected academic fun and joking to caring teacher-student relationships. Alejandra commented, "I like learning

because of them, because I think it's fun and there's a lot of ways that you can like have fun ways to learn and they taught me that and I'm very appreciative of that." She was not alone in her understanding, as reflected in Octavio's comments about caring teachers: if "they're caring" and "have a good sense of humor," "they make me feel like I belong here." In addition to how the racially diverse students in this study valued high expectations, it was also important that teachers behaved in ways that conveyed students could have fun at school and be playful with their teachers.

While a couple of the teachers mentioned having a sense of humor or playing along with students' jokes, and humor was visible in the classroom banter during observations, there was scant evidence in the interviews that teachers identified academic fun and joking as benefiting the construction of caring teacher-student relationships. Roberta was the only teacher who identified academic fun and joking as a mechanism for strengthening caring teacher-student relationships: "I also joke with them. I make sure that there's humor… They feel like good about themselves because they understanding it. I think that it really makes us more connected." Although, academic fun and teacher joking appeared less important than teachers' maintaining high expectations for racially diverse students, it was clear that students at David Ben-Gurion benefited from the availability of these classroom resources and that together they supported students' sense of belonging and caring teacher-student relationships.

Culturally Responsive Practices in the Classroom

Valenzuela (1999) emphasized that one of the obstacles in establishing authentic care between teachers and students is that teachers perpetuate a cultural divide: "Few

indicated that they knew many of their students in a personal way, and very few students said that they thought that their teachers knew them or that they would be willing to go to their teachers for help with a personal problem" (p. 63). As a result, teachers may knowingly or unknowingly exacerbate a stereotype of diverse students as "not worth the effort" because they will not succeed academically. At David Ben-Gurion, caring teacher-student relationships provided a foundation for students' cultures to function as assets in their school experiences. Chinese and Latinx students in this study held a strong sense of pride in their cultures, talked openly about their heritages, and felt that their cultures were represented in the classroom assignments. They appreciated that teachers knew their family heritages and that the school was multicultural. Lenore, a Latina fourth-grader, explained that language was a cultural identifier at the school. She understood her use of Spanish as way of locating her cultural experience:

> My second language is Spanish, but not the Spanish version, the Mexico version …. My father is a lawyer, Mexican … I like to talk about my culture with my teachers. I am really proud to be Mexican.

Similar to Lenore, Rita, a Chinese third-grader whose first language was Cantonese, also understood language as a cultural identifier. She shared that her teacher knows she is Chinese because the teacher knows that Rita speaks Cantonese at home and with one of the other students at school:

> Lew and me had argued in Chinese because [my teacher] is like, "What's cheese in Chinese? And, I was [Chinese for cheese]" like and then Lew was like "[a different Chinese word for cheese]" or something.

The use of their home languages at David Ben-Gurion was one way students' cultural knowledge was recognized as an asset. In moments when a student introduced a Spanish pronunciation into the classroom discussion, it did not provoke the teacher's attention or an "English only" response. Students understood that language was one way

of school being like home and that in the classroom one's home language was considered a cultural asset. Alejandra, explained how she viewed language as a representation of her culture:

> Yeah, I speak Spanish a lot … And Hebrew, I speak that here. I don't speak it that much at home, but sometimes I will talk to my brother in Hebrew if it's like a secret conversation because no one else speaks Hebrew in my house so it works. But mostly Spanish and English. My grandmother is from Mexico. She was born in Mexico and so my mom grew up speaking Spanish. I see my grandmother a lot, and we speak Spanish because that's the language that she speaks. She knows English, but she prefers to speak Spanish because that's her first language.

While students identified the use of their home languages in the classroom or that they occasionally talked to peers, during my research I was not privy to students' having conversations in their home languages.

The students at David Ben-Gurion were not representative of those students in the majority of research on how racially diverse students experience schooling; for instance, the students and teachers at David Ben-Gurion were not analogous to those at Seguín High School (Valenzuela, 1999). The students at David Ben-Gurion perceived school as caring about students and affirming of their culture; further, many of the students were fluent in English and came from bilingual homes. That the students' families resided in the same or similar neighborhoods as their teachers also likely benefited teacher-student relationships because the teachers and students shared geographically and culturally similar neighborhoods. This appeared to reduce the negative effect of navigating one's "identity in a bubble" or navigating the differences between home life and school life for racially diverse students (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007).

The diversity of the community was reflected in the school's culture. During an interview, Rita explained how she had done an assignment on the Chinese Moon Festival

for show and tell. This included an oral report to the class on how her family celebrated the festival, including bringing Moon Cakes to class for students to try as well as one of the lanterns that her family had built for the festival. The teacher hung the lantern above her desk, where it remained for the entire year. When Rita shared the experience, she was animated and overjoyed in having her culture affirmed with other students and by the teacher. She shared how it made her feel "happy, so like my share was worth it and everybody is listening and like enjoying it. And I'm happy to see my picture on the board."

Teacher Sherry has fourth- and fifth-grade classes. In her classes, she replaced the show-and-tell assignment from the earlier grades with assignments that entailed purposefully exploring the diversity of Jewish peoplehood. An example of this was a class period in which Sherry explored the concept of Jewish peoplehood by continent; the conversation was on why Jews lived on different continents. Included in the discussion was the desire to understand students' family histories and family trees. The assignment required students to research and report on Jews from South America. During a teacher check-in on whom the students had chosen and what they were learning about people of interest, students verbally reported back to the teacher and peers the names, countries, and what the people were known for. The reports included Jewish scientists, artists, politicians, and athletes from a number of countries including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Columbia.

This assignment provided insight into the school culture that exists at David Ben-Gurion and the manner in which affirming students' cultures is integrated into the curricula. It also supported an understanding of cultural diversity within the framework of

Jewish peoplehood. While the benefit of culturally responsive pedagogies has been documented, these moments may also have been challenging for racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion because it was a majority White school. By the teachers' placing racial and cultural diversity at the center of a classroom assignment, some students might have been tokenized or exoticized in the course of doing the work or reporting to the class. While I did not witness any such moments and students I interviewed did not report feeling tokenized, it was possible that such occurrences happened and that the emerging trust between racially diverse students and me did not provide the comfort levels they needed to share this information with me. Alternately, the combination of the concept of *Klal Yisrael*, the presence of other Chinese and Latinx students, and that teachers framed these culturally responsive moments as affirming may have mediated the tokenization of racially diverse students.

The use of age-appropriate, culturally responsive pedagogy emphasized the desire of teachers across grade levels to affirm students' diverse identities. Further, racially diverse students placed significant importance on caring teacher-student relationships. They did not describe the concept of "acting White" or of a burden to "fit in" as a challenge in their experiences of studenthood. Rubén expressed the diversity in his home life when he shared that his mother had converted to Judaism but that his family celebrates their Mexican heritage through food, language, and holiday activities such as making *cascarones*:

> Well, my dad is Jewish and my mom converted to Judaism when they got married, but we do, a lot of times, cook foods that are Mexican foods, and also, we sometimes, when we go, sometimes, we go places that have the Mexican sense of culture. Sometimes, have some Mexican traditions that we do like Mexican tradition when…pretty sure, there's a Mexican tradition when you have eggs and you fill them with confetti and then

> during springtime, we crack them on people's heads. It's kind of a fun thing.

Many students acknowledged the racial differences between teachers and themselves or the majority White student body, but they felt that the school had a multicultural diversity that they liked and that was similar to their experiences of home. When I asked Rubén if teachers knew he spoke Spanish and was Latino, he confirmed that they did and identified the presence of culturally responsive pedagogy:

> They do. There has also actually been days or projects where it is…the main premise is what is your heritage and explain it. We do a lot of projects where we either pick a country to study and study their heritage and their foods and their culture or do the country we're from. We did this last year. We did a day where everybody did a lot [of] project[s] and brought some food from a country that they were from. So, I think it's nice that they do multicultural…have a good sense of being multicultural and every descent, ethnic roots in the school.

Beyond identifying culturally responsive pedagogy as present at David Ben-Gurion, Rubén shared that it functioned to affirm his culture and the cultures of his racially diverse peers by stating, "I think it's nice that they do multicultural." The student data confirmed that students maintained flexible understandings of their cultural identities and liked the idea of their peers' being racially and culturally diverse. During one of my interviews, I asked Octavio, "Do you think she [your teacher] knows that you speak Spanish fluently?" Octavio responded by stating, "Definitely. All [teachers], everybody here knows that. It's not a private detail." Octavio later shared how he navigated between his Spanish and American identities:

> Because I'm kind of surrounded with a Spanish background at home like half of the week, I'm eating Spanish food, talking and the conversation in my house, unless it's when my dad…isn't Spanish. So it's like I'm always talking in Spanish. I'm always doing stuff that in Spain they do. So I kind of considered myself…most of the time, I consider myself more American than Spanish, but I've had phases in my life when I've considered myself more Spanish than American.

When I observed Octavio in class, the classroom became an extension of the fluid identity that he described; he moved seamlessly between sharing that his favorite soccer team was Barcelona and that he liked the LA Clippers. School affirmed his diverse racial identity. He confirmed, "there's really never been a moment when I feel this shouldn't be where I go, this shouldn't be my home basically." Similarly to Octavio and Rubén, for many of the racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion, the classroom was an extension of the fluid identities they maintained at home. The importance of home culture being expressed at school has been a unifying theme in the research on establishing caring teacher-student relationships (Howard, 2001, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). Howard (2001) found that "The attribute most frequently mentioned by the students about what created an optimal learning environment was their teachers' willingness to care about them and their ability to bond" (p. 137). The finding that racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion also sought schooling environments that affirmed their home cultures confirmed that the attributes racially diverse students identified as beneficial in research on public and private schooling were important for the same reasons in private Jewish schools.

Contradictory data: Chinese male students may be constructed the same as white students

The student interviews provided some evidence that Chinese male students did not directly identify teacher practices as supporting their experiences of care at school despite the presence of culturally responsive pedagogies. While all three students identified that they benefited from caring teachers, the moments of care that they

described were in relation to academic assignments or in caring for their well-being in ways that was not specifically connected to Chinese culture; they commonly identified care in teacher behaviors that supported academic success. For Lew and Sam, who had only been at the school since the beginning of school year, care remained aesthetic rather than the authentic care that Eli, who had attended the school for 3 years, described. I could not establish from the data why these students did not describe this connection when their Latino and Latina and Chinese female peers perceived culturally responsive pedagogies. The absence of culturally responsive assignments in their interviews might have been a result of the individual perceptions of these three students or an anomaly in their interviews.

However, that all three Chinese male students did not identify culturally responsive pedagogies may indicate a broader challenge, that teachers at Jewish schools constructed Chinese male students as the same as White students. This is an easy conceptual leap to make because the data from the interviews with students and teachers as well as classroom observations confirmed that there was a limited presence of Chinese culture; Chinese culture related to classroom assignments appeared, as described previously, only in Rita's Moon Festival assignment. Further, Chinese culture was limited in the curricula whereas Latinx and Black cultures were more prominent in the students' and teachers' descriptions of the curricula. The implications for Chinese students, particularly male students who had attended the school for a shorter period of time, were that the absence of culturally responsive practices was an obstacle to establishing authentic care. As a result, these students were more likely to establish aesthetic relationships with their teachers and miss out on the academic benefit of caring

teacher-student relationships. Ironically, this may have been the result of a race-conscious approach in which teachers had developed awareness and comfort in teaching about Latinx and Black cultures. The interviews suggested that teachers constructed Chinese students as White and appeared more comfortable and purposeful in having established assignments and practices that prioritized Latinx and Black cultures and histories over Chinese culture and history.

Race-Conscious Teaching

It was not by accident that teachers at David Ben-Gurion were able to establish caring teacher-student relationships. Ladson-Billings (2009) suggested that "teachers who practice culturally relevant methods not only see themselves as professionals but also strongly identify with teaching" (p 37). Teachers at David Ben-Gurion desired to be effective teachers for all of their students and shared their understanding of the need for curricula to be culturally responsive. Teacher-student relationships were supported by a school culture that was rooted in the Jewish values discussed in Chapter 1 (*chesed, Klal Yisrael*, *tikkun olam,* and *tzedakah*) as well as in academic expectations (critical thinking, arts & sciences, and project based learning), the combination of which was intended to develop students who were ethical in character and would become engaged global citizens. The school culture and teacher practices supported racially diverse students' ability to see themselves in the larger narrative of the Jewish people, one that was taught as inclusive of people of color.

Teachers at David Ben-Gurion implemented culturally responsive teaching practices as a strategy for achieving caring teacher-student relationships. The

interweaving of academic content and Jewish religion and culture grounded teachers in a culturally responsive pedagogy. For example, teacher Sherry engaged students in exploring Jewish cultural diversity through a research assignment that explored Jewish peoplehood in Latin America. She explained that students had to research "the life of Jews from their country and doing a whole presentation including food and music to really, to show that, you know, Jews aren't just from Israel. Jews aren't just from Europe. We have the first Jews in the Americas were actually in Latin America." In teacher Elsie's social studies classroom, she identified her use of a culturally responsive curriculum through the exploration of cultural themes that are part of the dominant narrative of Jewish history and culture and how they related to other cultures with similar histories. For example, she explored how "Harriet Tubman was called the Moses of her people" and used slavery as a way of relating Black history to Jewish history "to help the students make those connections because I know they know that through Jewish studies in their own backgrounds." Elsie also introduced students to literature that was racially diverse including *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry,* the novel by Black writer Mildred Taylor. Elsie framed these conversations within the Jewish value of creating justice in the world, one of the values of the school and an important practice in its underlying mission:

> We [the class], we're talking a lot about justice and what that means, and I've been trying to get them [students] to articulate the ideas about justice that they've seen in the novels that they've read and in social studies, particularly in the African American experience, because that's been a lot of the part of the curriculum this year.

Elsie described a race-conscious approach to teaching social justice; by teaching social justice through the experiences of Black Americans, she engaged students in a discussion of racism in America that through the curriculum explored concepts such as segregation, property ownership, physical abuse, religion, and oppression. Elsie

purposefully developed her curriculum in order to explore with students how racism and culture are part of America historically and today. She implemented a race-conscious curriculum during a political climate that is marked by an increase in race-related violence, anti-Semitism, and the visibility of white supremacist activities. The curriculum provides an opportunity for students to negotiate their own understandings of where they fit into the social justice conversation and how their racial and cultural identities can be assets or how the dominant culture may pose a threat to them in their experiences of America.

Ladson-Billings (2009) suggested that "cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right" (p. 20). At David Ben-Gurion, teachers used a race-conscious approach to teach social justice that provided students entrance into the experiences of oppression and otherness that racially diverse students identified with directly and White students contextualized as part of their experience of American society. Racially diverse students in this study confirmed the presence of a culturally responsive pedagogy as teacher caring. They perceived the curricula as a connected to teacher caring because it reinforced their sense of belonging at school. Teacher Sherry explained her purposeful use of culturally referential moments in her own practice:

> She [student] is, her family is from Mexico, but the country she got was Colombia …. She's really interested in doing it, she's doing a phenomenal job, and it's engaging to her because it's close to her…I mean she's seeing the similarities to things that she grew up with and things that she knows, and I mean, they all know a student that graduated last year, who her family was Columbian, so there's lots of connections …. It's interesting for them because a lot of people don't think about the Jews in Latin America, and so it's new for a lot of them. And then for the ones that have that heritage and that connection, I think it strengthens their engagement.

Teacher Sherry made the curriculum culturally responsive and identified the value

of this practice in promoting academic engagement. The research on relational practices has shown that students frequently report that school is more fun and engaging when they can relate to the work in a personal way and can share their personal perspectives. Faircloth (2012) found that "class members specifically described feeling more connected to class when they participated in activities that allowed them to express their feelings and beliefs" (p. 338). Teachers at David Ben-Gurion have developed an academic space that students can relate to. Their classroom practices have activated a dialogic space for teachers and students to engage knowledge as an exploration of teachers' understandings and students' own funds of knowledge. The result has been that the power structure has shifted from one that is teacher driven to one that is shared; students were responsible for the coconstruction of knowledge.

Freire (2016) suggested, "students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in the dialogue with the teacher. . . . Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world" (p. 81). Such a dialogic practice when employed as part of the classroom pedagogy at David Ben-Gurion worked to establish teacher-student relationships that were relational and an essential factor in establishing teacher caring. Further, the social justice curriculum was used as a race-conscious approach to developing moral understandings of the world. The curriculum required White as well as racially diverse students to think critically about how people of different races and cultures experience the world differently. Teachers affirmed racially diverse students' cultures through the curricula and provided moral scaffolding for how to care about injustice.

Noddings (2005) observed that "Teachers show students how to care, engage

them in dialogue about moral life, supervise their practice in caring, and confirm them in developing their best selves" (p. 6). At David Ben-Gurion, this moral foundation extended the relational aspects of education as meaning making for racially diverse students as well as for those students who, because they are White, might not otherwise have to question their relationships with the world or how they experience it differently from people of color. Culturally responsive teaching practices connected classroom activities with the broader tenet of *tikkun olam*.

Contradictory data: Colorblindness was visible

in some teacher practices

Despite interview findings that teachers implemented culturally responsive pedagogies and established caring, there was evidence that teachers maintained liberal notions of colorblindness. It has been well documented that teachers who do not share the cultural and racial diversity of their students exhibit behaviors of colorblindness and subtractive schooling practices (Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). While racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion described caring teacher-student relationships and that teachers provided culturally responsive assignments, teachers exhibited practices that had the potential to hinder cultural affirmation. The most salient example that presented itself in the data came from teacher Caryn, who taught Grades 6, 7, and 8. When asked if her curriculum addressed the diversity of students on campus, she responded:

> Mine is not this year. Not that I can think of. They teach math and Hebrew, and then language arts, we studied *Zlata's Diary*. I don't really think I have, in my class there is an Asian boy and everyone else I think is Caucasian. So I haven't. I don't know if that's the right way to put it, but I

> think in social studies they've studied more about diversity and in the Jewish studies … a lot about Latin America and Jews there.

Caryn's response was problematic because she assumed that "everyone else" was Caucasian and had not taken the opportunity to learn about students' racial and cultural diversity beyond assumptions about the colors of their skin. As noted in her own parenthetic statement during the interview, "I don't know if that's the right way to put it," she was uncomfortable with the absence of cultural relevance in her own curriculum. Caryn's colorblind approach dismissed the opportunity to affirm the cultures of students from diverse backgrounds. It was troubling that while her own pedagogical practices did not recognize racial diversity, she understood the value of culturally supportive pedagogy because she was able to identify its presence in another teacher's class: "I think in social studies, they've studied more about diversity."

Colorblindness is replicated in the pedagogical practices of teachers frequently without their realizing it and is likely a systemic challenge of education in private Jewish schools whose teachers are more likely to be from White and Ashkenazi religious and cultural backgrounds. In this particular example, Caryn may have felt that *Zlata's Diary* was an effective extension of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in developing a broader understanding of genocide than only relying on the Holocaust. However, the absence of a race-conscious approach was problematic because *Zlata's Diary* fails to provide a culturally affirming pedagogy for racially diverse students in this classroom and does not challenge White students to develop an understanding of how race matters. The use of racially diverse genocide literature would have provided an opportunity to problematize genocide and discuss how whiteness and power operate in unjust ways in society in Israel and globally. Teachers in majority White, private Jewish schools must critically examine

their teaching practices to ensure that they do not replicate the injustice that colorblindness promotes.

Research has suggested that teachers frequently operate from pedagogical positions that are structurally reinforced by society and as a result often fail to take into account the racial and religious backgrounds of their students (Subedi, 2006). It is important for teachers who believe that culturally responsive pedagogy is exclusively for racially diverse students to understand that it has value for their White peers as well. When teachers justify the absence of culturally responsive pedagogy based on the perceived racial and cultural backgrounds of students, as the data suggested that Caryn was doing, they are making a "semantic move" that allows racism to be strategically managed (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). In this particular example, the implication was that Caryn would have had a more culturally responsive approach if only she had more racially diverse students. Some educators seeking to defend Caryn's pedagogical practices might want to suggest that she was providing a culturally responsive curriculum because the students in her class are White. However, such a position fails to understand that students come to school to learn about the world beyond their classrooms.

The value of culturally affirming pedagogies for racially diverse students as well as their White peers is that teaching about the experiences of racially and culturally diverse people disrupts socially dominant, White narratives that might perpetuate racial difference as a deficit and instead provides a way for understanding racial diversity as an asset (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). It was also possible, as alluded to earlier, that students who came from racially diverse households that the teacher misunderstood as White would find an academic benefit in an affirmative

curriculum. In a small, community-based school such as David Ben-Gurion, where students attended from kindergarten through eighth grade, it is important to telegraph to future students, particularly those who are racially diverse, that your teaching practices recognize their cultures in the classroom. Doing so will provide a stronger opportunity for the cumulative effects of teacher caring to promoting academic achievement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Jeynes, 2005; Roorda et al., 2011).

Caryn, in her teaching practices, was comfortable responding to conceptions of religious diversity as indicated by her use of *Zlata's Diary* because it is a familiar experience, but racial diversity was more challenging because the conversation would require knowledge that is further from her personal experience and less comfortable. While racially diverse students indicated that they felt that teachers at David Ben-Gurion were caring, it was also evident that these students navigated an experience of schooling that was challenging and complex. That there existed a cultural incongruence between the way students at David Ben-Gurion perceived their teachers and the way some of their teachers perceived them—for example, students may have assumed that teachers knew more about their cultural backgrounds than in fact was known—was indicative of this complexity and of the challenge Jewish schools face in establishing culturally responsive curricula.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Discussion and Implications

In this chapter, I explore the current research study and how my data inform the process of constructing educational spaces that foster caring teacher-student relationships that promote academic engagement and a sense of belonging at school in support of racially diverse students in a majority White, private Jewish school. I approach the discussion by framing it in response to each of the three research questions. In the first section, "Confirmation of Caring Teacher-Student Relationships," I identify the presence of caring teacher-student relationships and explore their significance in relation to existing data and the implications for private Jewish schools. In response to the second question, in the section "Racially Diverse Students Benefit from Caring Teacher-Student Relationships," I summarize the characteristics of teacher-student relationships and how they are operationalized in alignment with existing research. Further, I examine racially diverse students' beliefs and how they maximize the benefits of caring teacher-student relationships. In response to the third research question, in the section titled "Teachers Are Purposeful in Establishing Caring-Teacher Student Relationships," I explore teacher-held beliefs and practices in response to student perceptions of effective teachers and

discuss the implications. I complete this section by acknowledging some of the limitations of the study, making recommendations for classroom practices that support the development of caring teacher-student relationships at private Jewish schools, providing some suggestions for future research, and concluding with a personal reflection.

With the current investigation, I provide new insights about what racially diverse students in a sample majority White, private Jewish school experience and what they perceive as beneficial in promoting their academic engagement. I further an understanding of practices that racially diverse students describe as effective and that may be implemented successfully in schools. The scope of the research does not provide a comprehensive response to the absence of data in the subject area, and it is my hope that by peering into this particular corner of private Jewish schooling that this study will serve as a catalyst for additional research toward the continued strengthening of our schools.

Confirmation of Caring Teacher-Student Relationships

The purpose of this section is to discuss the ways that caring teacher-student relationships are situated in a majority White, K-8 private Jewish school. This examination of racially diverse students' perceptions adds to the body of research on student narratives about how they navigate schooling. Further, I identified racially diverse students' beliefs about the establishment and value of caring teacher-student relationships.

The students in this research indicated the presence of caring teacher-student

relationships. Further, they described caring in affective behaviors such as teacher sharing, teacher listening, and culturally responsive classroom practices. They placed high value on the relational aspects of their encounters with teachers. As Lenore, a Latina fourth-grader, explained, "When they care, they listen to me and try to work out my problems. They yell at me for doing stuff that isn't important. I know they care about what I think." Like Lenore, many of the students emphasized the individual nature of caring teacher-student relationships. Students' comments about their teachers suggested that they benefited from classroom practices that they perceived as forms of authentic care and reinforced a sense of belonging at school. Students' perceptions that their teachers' caring was affective and authentic and established belonging is congruent with previous research (Cornelius-White, 2007; Howard, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999).

That caring teacher-student relationships reinforced belonging is important because racially diverse students' experiences of schooling are burdened with the additional responsibility of navigating institutionalized power that frequently operates against their cultures and their belonging at school. Administrators, teachers, and the school structure itself reproduce societal racism that privileges whiteness as normal, and as a result, racially diverse students experience alienation at school. Students in the present study identified caring as connected to a sense of belonging. The experience of caring at David Ben-Gurion was supported through a framework of Jewish care that was culturally responsive and understood the intersectional construction of Jewish identity. Teachers affirmed racially diverse students' cultural practices, and students described moments of authentic care as relational.

Students at David Ben-Gurion shared understandings of caring that situated it in a

dialogue between teachers and students; they described caring as a series of encounters and perceived it as reciprocal in practice. The reciprocal nature of these relationships appeared to amplify caring within the relationship for both the cared for and the carer. The types of affective behaviors and the nature of teacher-student relationships that were described were in alignment with previous research, which suggested that students benefited from a cumulative effect (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Gay, 2010; Noddings, 2005). The students often attended classes taught by the same teacher across multiple grades or in classrooms that combined grades, a school structure that maximized the cumulative effect of teacher-student relationships. This suggests that caring teacher-student relationships in schools that are structured as K-8 and where teachers maintain relationships with students beyond a single grade level have the potential to promote engagement more effectively than schools in which the elementary and middle grades are distinct experiences or where teachers are unable to maintain ongoing relationships with their former students. The impact of school structure on student engagement in private Jewish schools warrants further investigation because it appears to challenge previous research that suggests that teacher-student relationships are less positive as students grow older (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

Valenzuela (1999) suggested that Latinx students identify care in their ability to differentiate between aesthetic and authentic teacher practices. Students conceptions of trust are pivotal in their determination of caring; students in this study identified a connection between caring relations and the presence of trust between teachers and students. In many cases students emphasized the need for teachers to exhibit authentic care; students described authenticity in teacher-student encounters in which being trusted

with personal information about their teachers or teachers' being strict, for good reason, indicated the presence of a caring teacher-student relationship.

Racially diverse students were sophisticated in discerning when care was present in the relationship by distinguishing teacher strictness as an attribute of care when prompted by holding students to high academic expectations. The findings in the present study suggest that the experiences of grade-school students is similar to those of the high school students in the research by Schussler and Collins (2006) in which students "felt teachers held these expectations not as abstract concept for the students as a whole, but took and interest in them as individuals, helping them feel respected as students" (p. 1472). That students at David Ben-Gurion identified authentic care and teacher expectations is in alignment with previous research that suggests that students perceive caring when the curriculum is culturally responsive (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999).

Students in this study held perceptions of caring that were holistic and confirmed through the presence of culturally responsive caring as part of a conception of Jewish peoplehood. Culturally responsive care was identified when it was student centered; specifically, students felt cared for when teachers acknowledged their home cultures or sought ways to incorporate students' cultures into classroom assignments or activities. Such moments affirmed racial diversity in the context of a majority White, private Jewish school. Further, racially diverse students' perceptions that teachers knew their personal backgrounds affirmed culture as an asset and further supported caring teacher-student relationships that reinforced belonging and a sense of school as an extension of home. Research has suggested that belonging of this type supports student engagement and

reduces the likelihood of dropout (Garza & Soto Huerta, 2014; Howard, 2001).

When students in this study perceived culturally responsive caring, they also confirmed the presence of caring teacher-student relationships. The majority of student interview data suggested that caring teacher-student relationships promoted academic engagement. Once a caring relationship was established, racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion were receptive to the relationship being operationalized in a manner that students maintained held them accountable to higher expectations and promoted academic engagement.

In summary, the data in this study agreed with findings from broader research on the importance of affective behaviors in establishing and supporting positive teacher-student relationships (Cornelius-White, 2007; Roorda et al., 2011). In alignment with Noddings's (2005) theory of care, the students in this research described caring as situated in relational encounters and that teacher authenticity was present in these caring teacher-student relationships. Specifically, students identified affective behaviors (teacher listening, teacher sharing, and teacher expectations) as anchoring caring relationships. The data suggested that students at David Ben-Gurion perceived a particular value of caring teacher-student relationships to be their ability to support academic engagement and a sense of belonging at school. In addition to confirming the presence of caring teacher-student relationships, students were aware of being racialized at school.

The students in this study did not perceive themselves as the same as White students, and they indicated that teachers knew they had different cultural heritages than their White peers. Further, students identified the affirmation of their cultures in the classroom; they perceived the school as multicultural and that Jewish religious and

cultural values were supportive of their experience of schooling. That the religious school structure operated in support of establishing and strengthening caring teacher-student relationships confirmed previous research by Jeynes (2005) and Benveniste et al. (2003). Racially diverse students identified the presence of caring teacher-student relationships at a majority White, private Jewish school in ways that are consistent with previous research (Cornelius-White, 2007; Howard, 2001; Jeynes, 2005). That the data on student perceptions in the current study were congruent with more general research on racially diverse students' perceptions of what makes for caring teacher-student relationships speaks to the efficacy and elasticity of the limited available research on the subject. Further, the insights of racially diverse students in this study provide direction that can support developing effective teacher practices and shaping school structure in private Jewish schools.

Racially Diverse Students Benefit from Caring Teacher-Student Relationships

In this section, I discuss the attributes that racially diverse students articulate as present in caring teacher-student relationships and explore how they are operationalized. The discussion reveals how students construct a broad understanding of caring and maximize teacher-student relationships for their benefit. Racially diverse students describe the benefits of caring teacher-student relationships in terms of the sense of authentic care, belonging at school, and motivating their academic engagement.

Gay (2010) emphasized the need for culturally responsive caring, recognizing that teachers are responsible for fostering effective learning environments for racially diverse

students: “teachers can no longer be dispassionate and distant in their relationships with students, or attempt to avoid controversial topics and harsh social realities” (p. 52). The racially diverse students in this study shared conceptions of caring teacher-student relationships as centered on the well-being of students that was inclusive of academic performance but not limited to it. In this way, they sought authentic relationships with their teachers and more broadly sought out relationships that they constructed as extended family. This finding was congruent with previous research and suggests that teachers whom racially diverse students perceived as most effective were also those who were willing to care about students’ academic success and, more broadly, their well-being (Garza & Soto Huerta, 2014; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999).

Valenzuela (1999) identified the absence of authentic care in teacher-student relationships as an indicator of subtractive schooling. Racially diverse students in this study identified the need for trust in establishing caring teacher-student relationships. Further, they revealed the presence of authentic care, which they identified in encounters in which teachers were supportive of their cultures and in which they perceived the availability of trust as being indicative of the presence of mutuality. At David Ben-Gurion, when students perceived the relationship as based in mutuality, it affirmed notions of reciprocity and trust. This finding confirmed the presence of Noddings’s (2005) conception of care, whereby the carer and cared for may exchange places and where mutuality is necessary for care to be received.

Further, students acknowledged the need for teachers to provide authentic care, to operationalize affective behaviors in a manner that revealed relationships founded in

mutuality. For racially diverse students, trust was an indicator whose presence reinforced notions of teacher authenticity. Once a relationship was deemed authentic, it was no longer aesthetic or transactional, and its capacity to transform was revealed. The relationship established the teacher and student as coauthors of knowledge and took into account the student's experience, needs, and desires. This process was student centered, and in these encounters, the teacher-student relationship moved beyond the tethered boundaries of the transactional state of problem solving, reframing the experience of education as liberatory in its response to the personal (the cared for; Freire, 2016; Noddings, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). In these types of student-centered relationships, the teacher-student dialogue situates racially diverse students within their experiences of the world, which affirms their cultures as assets in their learning and which has the effect of promoting their academic engagement. This is supported by the research of Cornelius-White (2007), who suggested that student-centered approaches activate critical and creative thinking, increased student participation, and decreased oppositional behavior.

Students in the present study also identified caring teacher-student relationships as central to fostering a sense of belonging at school. An important aspect of fostering belonging at David Ben-Gurion occurred when teachers implemented culturally responsive practices. This supported students in completing assignments that had relevance to their cultural experiences in the world. The teachers' ability to activate culture within an assignment or activity affirmed students' cultural identities at school as well as promoted students' expressions of cultural pride at school. Student belonging was significant in its ability to navigate the potentially negative experience of negotiating identity in a bubble (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007) or conceptions of acting White (Ogbu, 2008)

despite the acknowledgement by racially diverse students of different home and school cultures. Belonging, for racially diverse students in this study, appeared to mediate the incongruence between home and school identities and was persistently present when students identified school as feeling like home. Students positively acknowledged classroom assignments that affirmed their cultures as well as teacher practices such as morning circle.

Another way that racially diverse students in this study operationalized caring teacher-student relationships was in their ability to motivate students. Previous research has identified affective behaviors as beneficial in promoting the academic engagement of racially diverse students (Cornelius-White, 2007; Roorda et al., 2011; Tosolt, 2010). Students at David Ben-Gurion perceived caring when teachers held them accountable for their behaviors or maintained high expectations. Frequently, the students identified teacher strictness as a way in which teachers sought the best from them. The conception of strictness was personalized and perceived as a form of caring.

Culturally responsive teaching recognizes the individual experiences of racially diverse students and in doing so establishes constructions of academic success that are personally demanding and flexible in meeting the students' needs (Gay, 2010). The data suggested that students perceived being held accountable or to high expectations as caring and that it had a motivating effect. When caring was present, students wanted to be held accountable, and their comments reflected levels of mutual respect and a sophisticated understanding of teachers' need to balance academic flexibility with classroom expectations. Students articulated the relational aspects of mutual trust in recognizing that high expectations contributed to their learning outcomes. Further,

students wanted to "do better" for teachers they perceived as caring and demanding, supporting previous research findings that teachers who hold high expectations of their students can have a dramatically positive effect on racially diverse students' academic engagement when students perceive high expectations as a form of caring (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999).

In summary, the data in this study revealed that racially diverse students identified caring as supported by teacher practices and school structure. Students confirmed previous research findings that the presence of affective behaviors indicated caring teacher-student relationships (Tosolt, 2010). Further, their comments also revealed a set of beliefs around the way the attributes could be operationalized toward broader outcomes, such as the development of authentic relationships between teachers and students, a sense of belonging at school, and a desire to do better on assignment. This is consistent with much of the research, which has suggested that affective teacher-student relationships have a significant impact on student engagement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Roorda et al., 2011; Tosolt, 2010).

Another implication of the data in response to the presence of caring teacher-student relationships was that students held sophisticated notions of caring. Racially diverse students' experience of caring teacher-student relationships was not that these relationships were opportunities to be coddled or to slide academically. Rather, as Gay (2010), Ladson-Billings (2009), and Valenzuela (1999) suggested, students in this study valued relationships that were mutual and reciprocal in holding them accountable, and they recognized the academic value of teachers' maintaining high expectations; students understood accountability as care. Confirming previous research, racially diverse students

in this study sought culturally responsive care and perceived teachers who were authentic in their caring as providing this care (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). Racially diverse students who perceived caring also identified the benefit of teacher practices that included directly talking about culture and wanted their cultures to be affirmed in their experience of school. When culturally responsive caring was present, students in this study confirmed the presence of caring teacher-student relationships and expressed that they were motivated to do better.

Understanding how students operationalize caring teacher-student relationships is important because it provides a way to inform teacher practices and support establishing pedagogies that reinforce what racially diverse students seek in the classroom. In this study, students sought teachers to initiate caring through teacher practices that provided students with a broader way to approach their experience of schooling. Students who felt teachers cared about them also shared a sense of belonging at school or school as an extension of family. Further, students valued the use of culturally responsive curricula and understood them as mechanisms for integrating their cultures or as multiculturalism, which they identified as an important aspect of the school structure. Rather than a singular attribute being identified as *the* reason racially diverse students felt cared for, the students provided a complex understanding of teacher-student encounters that supported constructing caring relationships.

Examining racially diverse students' perceptions at David Ben-Gurion has suggested that caring-teacher student relationships are complex in their organization. While students held a general sense that teachers did their jobs responsibly, in order for racially diverse students to identify caring teacher-student relationships, there was an

expectation of authenticity in the relationship and in the teacher's willingness to be in dialogue in coconstructing the experience of schooling. The students in my study maintained a belief that caring teachers were an important classroom resource, identifying both academic and interpersonal outcomes that were supported by caring teachers, and confirming that they benefitted from these caring relationships.

Teachers are Purposeful in Establishing Caring Teacher-Student Relationships

With this study, I explored racially diverse students' perceptions about caring teacher-student relationships; that the students found their relationships with teachers to be caring and effective in promoting academic engagement was primary to the research. In this section, I discuss how teachers perceived their own caring practices and their beliefs about the effects of caring teacher-student relationships. Overall, the data in this study suggested that teachers were purposeful in choosing pedagogies that maximized affective behaviors and took advantage of the school structure in developing caring teacher-student relationships that they felt motivated student engagement.

Teachers who implement culturally responsive practices strongly identify with being teachers and hold themselves and other teachers highly accountable for the success or failure of students (Ladson-Billings, 2009). In alignment with previous research, the interview data provided evidence that both teachers and students perceived caring teachers as maintaining high expectations of students and that they were personally accountable for their classroom practices (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). Further, teachers identified a purposeful approach in having

implemented pedagogies such as a "responsive classroom" that establish affective relationships; they perceived themselves as "a part of it" in describing the construction of teacher-student relationships. These teachers revealed a desire to establish teacher listening and knowing each student as individuals as a pedagogical practice for establishing and strengthening caring teacher-student relationships. These practices are in alignment with previous research that has suggested that students perceive teachers who know them in a personal way as a form of culturally responsive caring (Gay, 2010). The data in this study suggested that teachers' beliefs about their own practices were accurate because they were congruent with racially diverse students' perceptions of those practices.

Teachers at David Ben-Gurion believed that caring occurred in dialogic encounters. The teachers in this study used assignments to foster relationships that moved beyond aesthetic responses towards supporting students' personal needs and participating in their extracurricular activities to establish authentic caring. Previous research has suggested that teachers who behave in ways students perceive as authentic or similar to home provide culturally responsive caring (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). The perceptions of teachers that caring relationships were a resource for racially diverse students at David Ben-Gurion were confirmed by students who perceived that teachers were caring.

Further, teachers perceived themselves as maintaining high academic expectations and holding students accountable based on individualized expectations. In this way, teachers exhibited the core practices of culturally responsive caring in alignment with research that has suggested that effective teachers of racially diverse students hold high

academic expectations and ensure that they are providing emotional support that facilitates classroom participation (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). The data in this study clarified that teachers understood that caring teacher-student relationships motivated student engagement. Teachers described that they believed there were connections between effective teaching, caring, and attending and students' personal performance. Teachers exhibited caring that revealed their values, fostered the development of students' interests, maintained high academic expectations, and supported a culture of school as an extension of home, all of which are behaviors that previous research has identified as necessary in culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999).

Establishing culturally responsive teaching in a private Jewish school can be challenging because, as has been previously described, student bodies are typically a majority White and in the school environments, the teachers are often White. Based on previous research (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Thompson, 1998; Tosolt, 2010), it was to be expected that teachers in this study would be uncomfortable recognizing the cultures of students who are different from them or in talking about race and culture. Teachers shared beliefs that confirmed an understanding of differences between racially diverse students' cultures and their own. Many of the teachers implemented culturally conscious approaches that affirmed students' cultures at school.

Teachers' perceptions of providing culturally responsive curricula were supported by racially diverse students who acknowledged feeling supported by teachers who welcomed the use of their home languages at school and provided opportunities for students to share their cultures as part of schooling. Most teachers' comments suggested

that they valued culturally responsive practices and integrated them into their curricula. Teachers described knowing students' cultures and seeking ways to integrate culture into assignments. Teachers' beliefs about culturally responsive pedagogies included maintaining high academic expectations of racially diverse students. That the teachers' own beliefs translated into practices that required students to perform at their best was established by students who described teachers as holding them accountable, suggesting that integrating culturally responsive pedagogies also included maintaining high expectations of racially diverse students.

Additionally, teachers who recognized the value of culturally responsive pedagogies identified their roles as warm demanders, balancing between teacher and friend in their student relationships. There was also evidence that some teachers struggled to incorporate culturally responsive practices despite articulating the awareness of the existence of these practices by other teachers. The struggle one teacher exemplified is one that researchers have theorized and found is common in teachers who are uncomfortable talking about race and culture (Ladson-Billings; 2009; Tosolt, 2010): the teacher's struggle affirms her own assimilationist teaching practices and misses the opportunity of being culturally responsive. Racially diverse students in this particular teacher's classroom did not report colorblindness as disruptive to their school experiences, and other teachers who were effective in establishing caring supported culturally responsive pedagogies that the students understood as helping to make school an extension of home, a place of belonging and where they were held accountable.

Teachers also recognized that supporting students' belonging included participating in extracurricular activities and in life cycle events such as bar and bat

mitzvahs and baseball games. The racially diverse students in this study confirmed teachers' perceptions that they provided student support outside the classroom. Previous research has suggested that teachers who act like family members by taking personal interest in students' lives, such as participating in extracurricular activities, promote culturally responsive caring (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001).

Teachers at David Ben-Gurion described leveraging the school's structure, specifically their flexibility in individualizing their curricula—which they attributed to small classroom sizes—and further, that the school culture was organized around Jewish values provided a resource for entering conversations about race and culture. Teachers' perceptions of the advantages of religious school structure as an academic benefit for racially diverse students confirmed previous research (Bryk et al., 1993; Jeynes, 2010). Teachers in the current study described how they used conceptions of *Klal Yisrael*, specifically, the diverse cultural makeup of the Jewish people, as a framework for establishing culturally responsive pedagogies. Further, teachers whom racially diverse students identified as caring had adopted race-conscious approaches toward teaching. These teachers purposefully explored the diverse cultural history of the Jewish people and used this history to support students' exploration, through classroom assignments, of people who have experienced oppression.

In summary, most teachers in this study understood that race mattered and had established culturally responsive pedagogies that supported the construction of caring teacher-student relationships. These were revealed in the teachers' practices and confirmed by the racially diverse students in the study, who identified caring teachers as exhibiting many of the teacher qualities described by Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings

(2009) in their conceptions of culturally responsive teaching. Colorblindness was visible, though it did not appear in this particular study to disrupt the construction of caring teacher-student relationships. Teachers articulated their desires to share openly about their own lives and to participate in racially diverse students' academic and personal lives. Such personal attention reinforced the reciprocal process of caring teacher-student relationships and their ability to promote engagement.

Limitations

Findings in this study are limited by the specific context of this K-8 private Jewish school and to the experiences of the participants. The students and teachers who participated in this study are not homogenous, and because their lives have been shaped by their lived experiences of cultures, religions, and beliefs that are likely different from the dominant culture, it is important to remain circumspect in generalizing the findings.

Another limitation is the scope and small sample size of the research. While the participants and location were purposefully selected, the findings remain reliant on the perceptions of 10 students and 5 teachers. Among student participants, the gender and age makeup was not evenly distributed, particularly for the older grade levels, and that the racially diverse students who participated in the study did not include Black students may bias the outcomes. It is possible that a larger and more diverse data set achieved through a mixed-campus approach may have yielded different outcomes. While placing the perceptions of students and teachers in conversation with each other and the larger body of research provides multiple perspectives and a mechanism for cross-verification of the data, the data were only collected from one-on-one interviews, group interviews

with the children, and classroom observations. I did not implement any other quantitative methods.

This research study building on previous work on caring teacher-student relationships has provided a deeper understanding of how the participants in this school context understood and benefited from caring relationships. That the findings were for the most part in alignment with previous research on racially diverse student experiences of caring teacher-student relationships appeared to affirm that there are some similarities across the experiences of studenthood for racially diverse students that should be used to inform teacher practices in private Jewish schools. Teachers and administrators who benefit from the insights of the participants in this research should be cautious not to assume that because their school represents a similar cultural makeup or shares similar structures, adopting the caring practices described here will result in the same ethic of care being exhibited or received.

In some ways, the limitations of this research study provide a direction for future research. Specifically, the intention of my study was to bring attention to the need for more research on how racially diverse students navigate private Jewish schools. Despite the limitations of this study, the confirmation of private Jewish schools as educational spaces where caring teacher-student relationships are a resource for racially diverse students has provided evidence there is a need for additional research on how race and culture operate in private Jewish schools. Some avenues of inquiry for future investigation that could support the development of understanding around the ways in which race and culture operate across the private Jewish school system that I can imagine include the following:

First, the majority of research on racially diverse students in private and public schools comprises quantitative studies that incorporated rich demographic data such as student SES, race, gender, and household structure and school demographics such as size, geographic location, and teacher and administrator qualifications to shape landscapes of education in which students experience schooling. A national survey on the experiences of racially diverse students in private Jewish schools that also collected rich demographic data could further the opportunity for comparative analysis of effectiveness between Jewish schools, religious schools in general, and public schools. It would also further an understanding of whether different variables such as gender, race, religiosity, teachers, and geography influenced racially diverse students' experiences of schooling. Such data could also support a deeper understanding of broad demographic trends within the Jewish community, such as interfaith marriage, if the demographic data informed how students from interfaith families experience school and if their perception of schooling is considered supportive or disruptive in the formation of their Jewish religious and cultural identities. Such data could also support private Jewish schools in developing private and governmental funding sources.

Second, qualitative research that examines the experience of racially diverse students in private Jewish schools that have large populations of racially diverse students could add fidelity to student perceptions of effective teaching practices. It is possible to imagine that schools with large populations of racially diverse students may implement unique pedagogies or operate with different school structures that could inform and support other educational spaces. Such spaces would provide an opportunity to further investigate differences between Chinese and Latinx students' experiences of schooling

that appeared in this research study as well as the experiences of Black students in private Jewish schools.

For example, schools with a large population of Chinese students or multiple schools with Chinese student populations would provide an opportunity to more closely examine the way Chinese students experience schooling in majority White private Jewish schools and if teachers perceive Chinese male students the same as White students as was indicated in this study. Similarly, a school with a large Latinx student population or multiple schools with Latinx populations would be a research landscape that could build on the findings at David Ben-Gurion that Latina students perceived teacher listening as a more prominent classroom resource and further develop data that explored if this was the result of Latina students' receptivity or teachers' ability to construct culturally responsive classrooms differently for Latina students than their racially diverse peers.

Expanding on the findings in this research, it would benefit the field to understand if Black students perceived culturally responsive pedagogies as supporting their experience of schooling in private Jewish schools. Private Jewish schools with significant populations of Black students or multiple schools with Black student populations would provide an opportunity to understand if and how these educational spaces supported constructing caring teacher-student relationships and promoted academic engagement in ways similar to what functioned as resources for Latinx students in this study. Such research locations would also provide an opportunity to gather data on the effects of large racially diverse student populations on these schools' enrollment of their White counterparts. Does a tipping point exist, and, if so, are there significantly different implications for the school structures, recruitment, enrollment, teachers, curricula,

funding, and boards? Research of this type could support developing a deeper understanding of the geographic contours of private Jewish schools and reveal resources that racially diverse students identify as beneficial that have the potential to make an impact beyond schooling and improve the experience of racially diverse youth and their families at Jewish camps, in Jewish Community Centers, on Israel trips, and in their synagogues.

Third, there is evidence that Ethiopian students in Israel are being tracked and defined as "at risk" or worse being purposefully segregated (Berhanu, 2005; Kopp, 2015). A hostile schooling environment for Ethiopian Israelis is likely to support the construction of Ethiopian students as "deviant" or as "not worth the effort" in a manner similar to what is often experienced by Black and Latinx students in America. A comparative international study on the experiences of racially diverse students, particularly Black students, in private Jewish schools in America that could be replicated in public schools in Israel has the potential to identify what students in these schools perceive as effective and inform how to support schools in Israel in providing more effective educational experiences for racially diverse students. The ability to positively transform the way Ethiopian students experience schooling has social justice and societal implications for the future strength of the state of Israel.

Future research should be a catalyst for discussion and exploration of the topic by practitioners and social scientists, encouraging us to become more familiar with research literature in other academic spaces that has the potential to improve the experience of schooling in our private Jewish schools. There are many studies that one could imagine coming out of the current exploration, and I have suggested these three because for me,

they are an immediate way for research on the experiences of racially diverse students in private Jewish schools to promote a race-conscious approach as we build a more just experience of Jewish schooling and a more perfect world.

Recommendations

In this section, I share my recommendations for establishing caring teacher-student relationships that support racially diverse students in private Jewish schools. There are many characteristics including teacher practices and school structure that foster private Jewish schools in establishing an ethic of care for their students. The recommendations that follow are a response to this research and are intended to strengthen existing teacher practices and encourage those practices that racially diverse students have suggested promote caring teacher-student relationships.

It may seem commonplace to suggest that what students need is caring teachers, particularly when most teachers would describe themselves as caring, and in fact, they may be. But as educators we must challenge ourselves to understand care differently, to allow racially diverse students' experiences to problematize and guide our pedagogies and follow their recommendations. It is their recommendations that will support our implementation of practices of caring with intention that are based on a foundation of religious and cultural heritages as a Jewish diaspora that supports constructing culturally responsive ways of teaching at an intersection of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Jewish care that accounts for this cultural diversity can support a counter-narrative to dominant assimilationist beliefs that may be replicated in private Jewish schools and, as a result, construct Jewish students as the same as White Christian students. Teachers who commit

themselves to culturally responsive forms of caring have the potential to shift an educational paradigm that frequently takes comfort and is comfortable in a universalist approach. Shifting the paradigm will require that we as educators recognize our own comfort and disrupt our own practices to intentionally implement what racially diverse students tell us they want: caring teacher-student relationships that affirm their cultural identities.

Private Jewish schools are structured around values that promote an ethic of care. Recognizing that there are many caring teachers who have as part of their practices affective pedagogies that promote caring teacher-student relationships, it would be a poor representation of the data to suggest that there is a crisis that must be addressed through a pedagogical shift. Rather, as the data in this study suggest, there is a strong foundation of caring from which teachers can further develop their practices with the intention of strengthening culturally responsive caring that will support the academic engagement of racially diverse students in private Jewish schools.

The data in this study confirm previous research that suggests affective teacher practices and culturally relevant caring foster the formation and strengthen caring teacher-student relationships that are an academic resource for racially diverse students. While there is not a simple "how to" for establishing and strengthening caring teacher-student relationships, listening to the recommendations of racially diverse students can provide instruction useful in shaping effective teacher practices. Teachers at private Jewish schools who are interested in promoting caring teacher-student relationships should consider adopting practices that support the following outcomes.

Ensure a visible ethic of care in the classroom

Caring should be culturally responsive and communicated through affective behaviors that students are more likely to receive as caring. Teachers who share about their personal lives and listen to students are perceived as providing authentic care. To respond to what students have indicated is effective, pedagogical practices that are student centered and grade appropriate, such as morning circles, should be implemented with the intention of further developing an ethic of care in the classroom. Teachers should actively position themselves as part of the educational experience in sharing their values and personal lives with racially diverse students. More specifically, teachers should seek moments in which they can share in responses to students' life experiences or toward assignments that are referential and expand students' understanding of the teacher as a person. The desired outcome is to become "a friend in a way" as the students in this research suggested. Such friendships recognize the power relations between teachers and students and still provide the mutuality needed for the carer and cared for to trust in the relationship.

The need for teachers to listen to racially diverse students goes hand and hand with the conception of teacher sharing. Teachers who listen exhibit practices such as academic flexibility (moving a due date of an assignment in response to a student request) and the use of dialogic encounters (problem posing) that support students' perceptions of being accounted for or that "I matter." Teachers who listen are perceived as respecting students and as individualizing their curricula. The goal of teacher listening in establishing an ethic of care is to support how teachers "know" students and how students are "known" by their teachers in a relationship that supports racially diverse

students' conceptions of what it means to be cared for or to be carers. Teachers who operationalize affective behaviors such as sharing and listening produce a caring teacher-student relationship that can promote academic engagement.

Establish authentic relationships

Authentic relationships operate as a litmus test for whether or not racially diverse students perceive caring. Valenzuela (1999) described teacher caring as aesthetic, a commitment to "ideas or practices that purportedly lead to achievement," or as authentic, as situated in "relations of reciprocity between teachers and students" (p. 61). The difference is significant because racially diverse students trust teachers who hold authentic relationships to be "there when you need them." Students understand authentic relationships in teachers whose practices of care go beyond concerns for academic achievement and include the students' well-being. The purpose is to operationalize authentic care to support racially diverse students' ability to fit in and toward the construction of school as a place of belonging.

Teachers who are seeking to construct authentic care need to hold a race-conscious approach that is supported by culturally responsive pedagogies. In their practice of authenticity, it is essential for teachers to talk about race and culture in ways that affirm racially diverse students' heritages and understand that they are not the same as White students. Teachers' ability to "talk straight" about race is significant in situating a race-conscious approach because it disrupts conceptions of whiteness as neutral and suggests to racially diverse students that they are respected (Thompson, 1998). The recommendation from teachers in this study, who were intentional in taking a race-

conscious approach, emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates culturally responsive practices and curricula that are supportive of racially diverse students.

Teachers must reconstruct their own understandings of race and should implement assignments that reflect their willingness to do so. Such assignments will explore the shared religious values the school is organized around through a race-conscious perspective. The purpose of a race-conscious approach is for all students to "make the connection" between assignments and students' cultures or how race and culture can be experienced differently in order to abolish systemic racism. In this effort to affirm racially diverse students' identities, teachers must also exhibit culturally responsive caring with the intention of making school feel like home. When teacher practices are effective in making visible an ethic of care and establishing authentic relationships, then it is also possible for racially diverse students to experience education as liberatory.

Maximize the school structure

Private Jewish schools are organized around shared religious values that provide a resource for teachers in establishing and sustaining caring relationships with racially diverse students. Teachers should maximize the school structure to benefit and foster affective relationships that are authentic in nature through a pedagogy that identifies religious values as inclusive of racial diversity. For example, exploring concepts of *Klal Yisrael* that are inclusive of racial and cultural diversity in order to disrupt the normative notions of the Jewish people as only White and Ashkenazi. Teachers who do this provide important cultural experiences for students that promote racial diversity within a

framework of Jewish care. Teachers who are effective describe these as "aha moments" in which racially diverse students and their White peers use religious and cultural values to construct a common understanding of Jewish peoplehood. In this way, teachers at private Jewish schools can reconceptualize practices that research has suggested are effective in Catholic schools (Benveniste et al., 2003; Jeynes, 2010) through a Jewish frame of caring and organize the school, particularly teacher practices, in a manner that effectively supports the experiences of racially diverse students in private Jewish schools. Teachers who maximize the school structure use of shared religious and cultural values that support forming school as an extension of family and promote a sense of belonging among racially diverse students.

Teachers can also use school structure to promote student accountability. In this study, teachers described how they took advantage of the small class size and flexible structure of the school in order to have agency in individualizing curricula or determining the outcomes of disciplinary procedures. These teachers were perceived by racially diverse students in this study as strict and caring, which echoes Gay's (2010) assertion that "genuinely caring teachers are warm demanding academic taskmasters" (p. 75). Teachers in this study suggested the need to balancing between being in teacher mode and being a friend figure. The autonomy that teachers maintain in managing discipline has the effect of reinforcing the familial aspects of school culture. These teachers also shared that they extend the familial aspects of school with similar autonomy in determining whether to include or exclude parents in responses to students' behavioral or academic challenges. When caring teachers are able to individualize the curriculum to the needs of students and exert authority and discretion in navigating academic and

behavioral supports for students, racially diverse students respect them like they would a family member. Teachers should explore how to maximize school structure in support of strengthening their ways of knowing students and parents as an extended family.

Personal Reflection

"Would you? Would you send Lilah and Jaspar to a private Jewish school?" one of my students asked. It was a complicated question for me to answer, but ultimately I responded "No." This dissertation was inspired by the personal journey of my children and of our family as we navigate what it means to be transracial. When we and our kids are present for the conversation about their hybrid identities, we can express it in linguistic shorthand, say as Jewish and Ethiopian. Rest assured, Black is visible when your mom and dad are White. Even the kids, despite their youth or because of it, have a good grasp of expressing their Jewish and Ethiopian heritages when it is called upon. In the everyday experience of life, the world sees our kids as Black, like the time at GAP when the White employee returned Lilah, who was getting a drink at the water fountain, to the only Black family in the store instead of to me; the family, in nearly Olympic synchronization, pointed at me to redirect the Gap employee. Of course, when the kids are with their Black or Latinx friends, then they are the Jewish kids and sometimes the Ethiopian kids, and when we are with Ethiopians, they are always Ethiopian kids. This complex hybrid identity is part of the reason we have chosen to send our children to public school even when my own research suggests that if Lilah and Jaspar attended a private Jewish school, they would benefit from caring teacher-student relationships. The location of the private Jewish school, which is more than 30 minutes away, and the fact

that our neighborhood public school is racially diverse (43% of students are White, 30% Hispanic, 9% Black, 6% Asian) and recognized for its excellence in education are also determining factors.

It is important to understand that our being White parents of Black children matters in choosing a school. We feel it is important for our children to attend a school where their peers and a few teachers look like them. We recognize that the construction of their identity is as much out of our hands as it is under our control. Their attending a racially diverse school has been a way of mediating whiteness. Among all of their friends, they also have Black friends to care for them and to care about as they navigate what it means to be Black and an elementary school student in today's world. It also matters because the parents of our children's friends are also our friends. These relationships are a resource and tremendous source of strength as we support each other in learning, laughing, and navigating race and culture as families.

Sometimes, such as when Lilah was initially tracked away from the Gifted and Talented Education Program classroom she now attends, I think about what may have changed our decision. It is possible, even likely, that if we were not able to support our children's Jewish identities at home, we would have chosen a private Jewish school. And there is no doubt that if the private Jewish school in our area had a significant number of Black students and families that we would have chosen it. As an educator and a parent, I believe that it is critical to the future of our community that private Jewish schools, but also camps, community centers, and synagogues, affirm the identities of racially diverse children and support their engagement at school and beyond.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE HEAD OF SCHOOL LETTER

Dear xxxx,

At xxxx we pride ourselves on fostering a caring and diverse Jewish community. Our intention is to promote the unique potential of each student and foster inquisitive learners.

I am writing to share that our school has been selected to participate in a research study, *Students' Perceptions of Caring Teacher-Student Relationships in Private Jewish Schools*. Erik Ludwig, who serves as the Director of the Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, is the lead researcher (see bio below) and this will help him to complete his doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study is to investigate how teachers establish effective teacher-student relationships in private Jewish schools. The research seeks to understand how students perceive the way effective teachers develop caring relationships in order to promote academic success. The research findings have the potential to inform how students in private Jewish schools perceive they benefit from positive teacher-student relationships and the value these practices may hold for other public and private educational landscapes. The research focuses on "bright spots" as examples of success that indicate how *caring* may be effective in developing positive teacher-student relationships and promoting academic engagement.

I am supportive of having Mr. Ludwig join our community and in sharing with him the strong, caring community of xxxx. Please take the time to review the permission statement below and if you feel comfortable provide your signature so that your child may participate. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to be in touch with Mr. Ludwig directly.

Warmly,
xxxx

APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Student Individual Interview
Date:
Interviewee:

1a. If I say, “I care about you” what comes to mind? Share some examples.
1b. What does “caring” look and feel like at home? How do you know it is caring? Share some examples.
1c. What does it mean to have a teacher care about you? How do your teachers show they care?
1d. Can you name a teacher who cares about you? What does this teacher do?
2. What is it like to be in Mr/s. _____ classroom?
3. Tell me about your relationship with Mr/s. _____.
4. What does Mr/s. _____ do to try to create a positive relationship between teacher-student or you and him/her?
5. On a 1 to 10 scale where 10 is amazing how "positive" is your relationship with Mr/s._____?
6. On a 1 to 10 scale where 10 is amazing how "close" is your relationship with Mr/s._____?
7. Does Mr/s. _____ share information about him/herself with the class? Examples?
8. Do you know a lot about M/rs. _____? Examples?
9a. Does M/rs. _____ try to learn about you and what is what is going on in your life? How? Does s/he care about your school life or your life outside of school?
9 b. How does it make you feel that s/he cares about your life only at school or (outside of school)?
10. What does M/rs. _____ do with the information s/he learns about his/her students?
11. How would you describe the way that M/rs. _____ teaches in class?
12. Does M/rs. _____ use what s/he knows about you in his/her teaching? Examples?
13. Does M/rs. _____ "care" about his/her teaching? Examples?
14. Do you think M/rs. _____ "cares" about students? How does he/she show this?

15. Do you think M/rs. _____ "cares" about you? How does he/she show this?
16. Do you think that Mr/s. "caring" helps you do better at school? How so?
17. Have you seen or hear of a friend getting treated in a caring way by a teacher? How so?
18. What is your current grade?
19. What would help you have a better grade? How so?
20. What would that grade be?
21. On a 1 to 10 scale where 10 is amazing how "caring" is your relationship with Mr/s._____?
22. Does the teacher allow you to share experiences from home in class? Examples?
23. How does it feel to be in a classroom where M/rs. _____ tries to learn about you? How does it affect you?
24. Do you think that M/rs. _____ understands your daily life--what it is like to be you when you are outside of school? How so? Why?
25a. Do you think that M/rs. _____ teaches differently to some students than to others students? How so? Why?
26b. Do you think that M/rs. _____ teaches differently to Black or Latina/o students than to White students? How so? Why?
27. How does it make you feel that M/rs. _____ treats you the same as White students? or treats you differently because you are Black/Latina/o?
28. If you were going to give M/rs. _____ advice about teaching what would it be?
29. Have you ever gone to public school?
30. What do you find different if anything about being a student in a private Jewish school?
31a. Do you think Black students are treated differently at private Jewish school? How so?
32b. Do you think Latina/o students are treated differently at private Jewish school? How so?
33. Does being in a private Jewish school change the way you interact with your teachers? How so?
34. Anything else you want to say?

APPENDIX C

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Teacher Individual Interview
Date:
Interviewee:

1. How does teaching in a private Jewish school affect what you do in the classroom?
2. What are your views of multicultural education?
3. Please tell me your beliefs about creating positive teacher-student relationships. How do you do this?
4. What changes have you made to your teaching behaviors and curriculum in order to develop positive teacher-student relationships. Does this change based on the class makeup (e.g. # of girls to boys)? Give examples?
5. Do you feel that positive teacher-student relationships have an affect on students' academic performance?
6. Do you feel a students' race or culture can get in the way of a positive teacher-student relationship? How so?
7. Please tell me your beliefs about creating a sense of "caring" in the classroom.
8. What do you do to create and maintain a sense of "caring" in the classroom?
9. Do you feel that "caring" has an affect on students' academic performance? How so?
10. What do you do to create and maintain relationships with your students?
11. Who is the student you have the most positive relationship with? Describe it? How does it affect your teaching? The student?
12. How do you learn about the students and their life outside of school? What projects or activities do you use to do this?
13. How do you use what you learn about the students and their home life in the activities and lessons you plan in the classroom? Example?
14. How do you think students respond to you learning about who they are/or their life experiences in class?
15. What types of information do you share about yourself with the students?
16. How do you think students respond to you sharing information about yourself?
17. Do you think that some (Black/Latina/o) students learn differently than other (White) students? How so?
18. Do you teach differently to some (Black/Latina/o) students than other (White) students in your class?

19. How is what you learn about your students used to create and maintain teacher-student relationships?
20. How is what you share about yourself used to create and maintain teacher-student relationships?
21a. How does all of this (your sharing, learning about them, and using what you learn about them) affect your relationship with your students?
21b. Does a students' race affect the way you share about yourself affect your relationship with your students? How so?
22a. How does all of this (your sharing, learning about them, and using what you learn about them) affect classroom discipline issues?
22b. Does a students' race change your discipline procedures? How so?
23. Have you ever taught in public school or a nonreligious private school?
24. What do you find different if anything about being a teacher in a private Jewish school?
25. Does being in a private Jewish school change the way you create teacher-student relationships? How so?
26. Anything else you want to say?

APPENDIX D

Table 2

COMPARISON OF STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF CARING

Category of Caring	**Female**	**Male**
Interpersonal	48.91%	48.31%
Academic	43.48%	34.75%
Fairness	7.61%	16.95%
Category of Caring	**Latinx**	**Chinese**
Interpersonal	53.90%	37.68%
Academic	34.04%	47.83%
Fairness	12.06%	14.49%
Category of Caring	**Grade 3-5**	**Grade 6-8**
Interpersonal	49.35%	46.43%
Academic	37.01%	42.86%
Fairness	13.10%	10.71%

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